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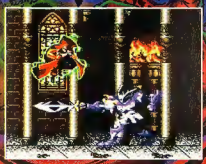

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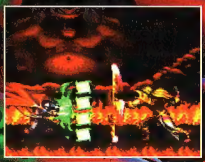

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COMICS® scene

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WORD BALLOONS

Slumberland Film Art: Courtesy Gary Kurtz

Here at COMICS SCENE, we take special note of each and every new comic-book property being developed for movies and TV. There are a heck of a lot of them, as you can tell by a casual glance at the Comics Screen list in the back of this magazine. (Go ahead and look, I'll wait.)

It's quite a list, and it grows almost every day as Hollywood, hard-up as ever for good ideas, throws money at publishers and puts every comic-book muscle boy and chesty leather girl on a trip through development hell. Just ask William Tucci (page 45); he always wanted his *Shi* comic to be a movie and he may yet get his wish. Or check out our coverage of the new *Superman* animated series now in development (page 28).

Since we are smack in middle of some kind of crazy golden age of comic-book-to-screen transformations, this is a perfect time to take a look back at the guy most responsible for the birth of this medium-mixing phenomenon. Without a doubt, that man is Winsor McCay.

You won't find him on any hot-artist lists or in the pages of *Daily Variety*, but McCay's influence on comics and their exploitation in different media is inescapable. Here is a man who was a greater showman than even Stan Lee, a hands-down better draftsman than almost any artist working in comics today, a writer of uncommon wit and imagination and a man who not only made his comics into an animated film, but practically invented the animated film itself. And he did it all long before any of us was even born.

Winsor McCay began drawing cartoons for the *New York Herald* and the *Evening Telegram* in 1903. He started his first continuing comic strip, *Mr. Goodenough*, the following year. One of McCay's popular *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend* strips became his first work to make the jump to the screen in 1906, when it was made into a live-action film by *Great Train Robbery* director Edwin S. Porter at the Edison Studios without McCay's involvement. On October 15, 1905, he began *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, which would become one of the most popular comic strips of all time.

How good an artist was McCay, you ask? Good enough that people by the thousands would pay just to sit and watch him draw. Now, maybe you would pay to watch Rob Liefeld draw Youngblood over and over, but would your parents? How about your Aunt Mabel? McCay held audiences all over the country spellbound just by making "lightning sketches" on a chalkboard.

With his characters a success in newspapers and vaudeville, McCay's next conquest was the big-time world of Broadway. *Little Nemo* opened at the New Amsterdam Theater in 1908 and was, at that time, the most spectacular and expensive production ever to hit the Great White Way. Only Disney seems capable of this kind of lavish treatment of its characters these days.

There have been a host of animated film adaptations of comics over the years, but McCay was there first. He put the characters from *Little Nemo* on-screen in 1910, just after animation was invented. A series of shorts followed, building the artist's mastery of the young medium. The widespread success of McCay's greatest film, *Gertie the Dinosaur*, has been credited with single-handedly creating the whole animation industry! In fact, McCay anticipated *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, touring with *Gertie* and giving lectures while the animated dinosaur seemed to be eating from his hand.

So, the next time you settle in to watch *Batman* on video, or maybe the new *Savage Dragon* cartoon series, think of Winsor McCay painstakingly drawing thousands of pictures of Little Nemo and his friends on rice paper all by himself. How far have we really come in the 80-odd years since then? Who knows. But, hey, HBO is working on a *Spawn* animated show. I wonder what McCay would have done if they'd had cable TV in 1910...

—Michael Stewart/Managing Editor

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LOSERS...UNITE!

Thanks to creator Marc Hempel, the world's misfits have two new heroes—TUG & buster.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Into a world starved for lusty, zesty, four-fisted he-man adventure comes Marc Hempel's titanically pompadoured duo *TUG & buster*.

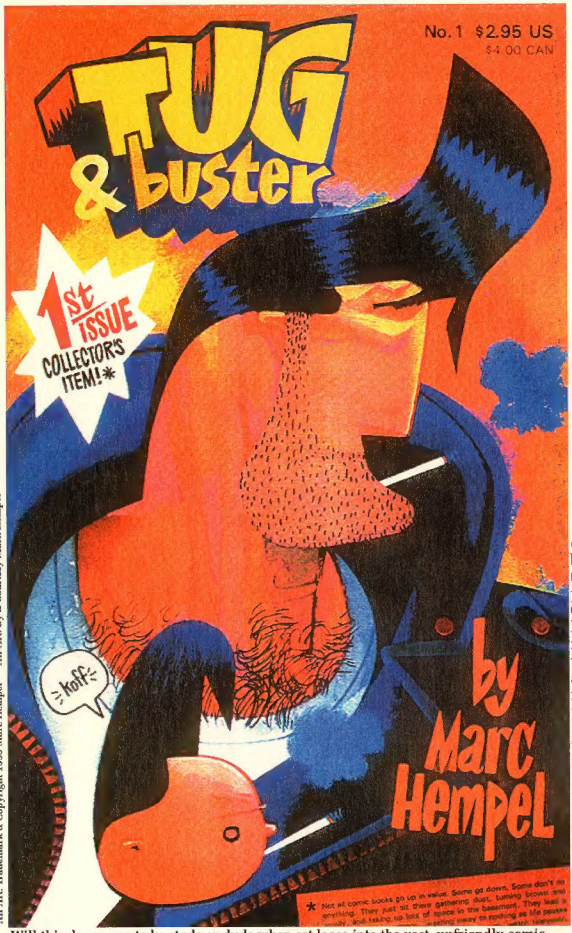
Marc Hempel uses his creations to explore the facets of his own personality. His best-known creation, a little boy in a straitjacket, explored helplessness in his own unique, personal style. Now, Hempel is looking at male bonding and hero worship in a new, bi-monthly black-and-white comic starring his latest creations, *TUG & buster*.

"Tug's a big guy and Buster is a little guy," explains Hempel. "Tug's real cool, has big, greasy hair, wears a leather jacket and always has a cigarette hanging out of his mouth. He doesn't really say or do anything, but he's Buster's idol. Buster worships him completely, and devotes his entire life to being like Tug. It's completely hopeless when you see the size difference—they're completely different body types. Tug is the strong, silent type and Buster is the short, irritating type!

"Strangely enough, *TUG & buster* largely centers on the relationship between the two of them," says Hempel. "It has fun with the whole hero worship thing, as well as the whole rugged American male ideal that we tend to embrace in this country.

"Tug looks really cool," he says. "He looks like a cross between Elvis, Robert Mitchum, Fabio and James Dean—throw them all together, with a bit of Frankenstein, and they would look like Tug. He's a real man times 10. He's pretty much over the top!"

TUG & buster, from Art & Soul Comics, is Hempel's first attempt at self-publishing. Previously known for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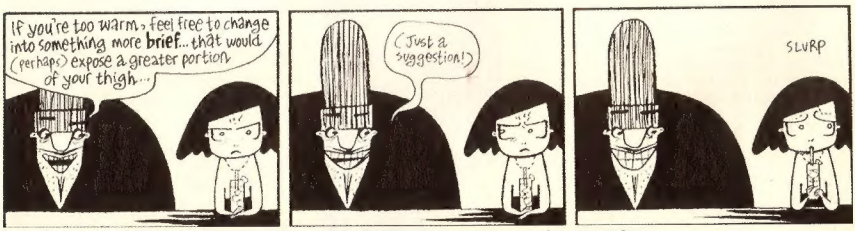
Will this duo prove to be studs or duds when set loose into the vast, unfriendly comic-book marketplace? The answer is in your hands, gentle reader.

"If I wasn't doing comics I would probably be in therapy," admits Hempel, who has let his id run loose on the page.

Gregory, his humorous strip starring a boy in a straitjacket and his pet rat (CS#35), the writer/artist shot to prominence last year when Neil Gaiman chose him to draw the final lengthy story arc, "The Kindly Ones," for *Sandman*. *TUG & buster* resembles the former far more than the latter. The saga begins with "Babe Quest" in the first issue, which also introduces supporting characters.

"You know you're in for a lot of fun with a title like that," says Hempel. "Basically, we get to meet Tug and Buster in that story and get a handle on who they are and what the relationship is. As soon as that's taken care of, they head out in their 'Tugmobile' and go cruising for babes. It's a pretty pathetic evening, populated with a bunch of loser-type characters—the kind that I love to depict so much! In addition to Tug and Buster, we have Stinkfinger, an intellectual slacker type who's constantly dumping on Tug and Buster and


If you're too warm, feel free to change into something more brief... that would (perhaps) expose a greater portion of your thigh...
(Just a suggestion!)
SLURP

Here, for your consideration ladies and gentlemen, is the barfly and pervert known only as Genital Ben.

their other friends, but always seems to be hanging out with them anyway.

"The other main character is Genital Ben. He's a 400-pound sex maniac who's always wearing a wool knit stocking cap, has a fancy moustache and goatee and a full-length overcoat. We never quite see his hands or what he's doing with them! He's always sitting at the bar, but he never has a drink in front of him—I wonder why. Genital Ben is another over-the-top character—he is to Tug and Buster what Wimpy is to Popeye. He's very eccentric, and always trying to cover up his perversions with politeness, but he's not really fooling anybody!

"It's *not* really a mature readers book," Hempel says. "I would not recommend it to children, mainly because the themes are adult. There's girl-chasing going on, and there's stuff about relationships. There's nothing very simplistic about it. Sex does happen, but it's not depicted graphically or anything—there's no nudity or dirty words."

Their creator has no idea what actors he would cast in a *TUG & buster* movie. "I don't think they walk the Earth in this day and age!" he jokes. "Buster is very infantile-looking—he's only three heads tall, counting his hair. I actually don't know of any adult who's that small. Even though Buster looks very childlike, he's indeed a man, but he's having a hard time convincing the world of it, and goes to great lengths to convince the rest of the world how tough he is. He falls far short of what he would like to be—which is Tug! Tug's his ideal, Tug being not so much a character but the physical projection of Buster's ultimate goal as a man. And Tug himself never says anything!"

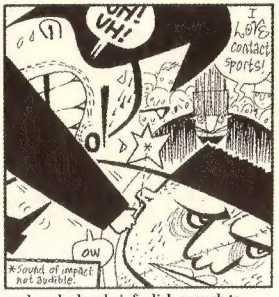
Hempel says several people have compared the pair to the Warner Bros. cartoon bulldogs Spike and Tyke. "They're different than that," he says. "There are similarities, but the hero-worshipping aspect doesn't quite stand."

The relationship between Tug and Buster is as original as Hempel can make it, he says, and he can find nothing that compares to it. "I'm trying to do something unique and personal," explains Hempel. "If I could easily think of a similar relationship, I would probably go back to the drawing board and rework it!

"I've been describing it as a parody of heroes and anybody who's foolish enough to worship them. *Gregory* is certainly a very honest and personal creation of mine, and has ties going back to Charles Schulz and Walt Kelly. It was expressing the very lost, helpless, infantile part of myself. The prob-

"They head out in their 'Tugmobile' and go cruising for babes. It's a pretty pathetic evening," says Hempel of *TUG & buster*'s first-issue extravangaza.

"He doesn't really say or do anything, but he's Buster's idol," Hempel explains of the huge, Andrew Dice Clay-like Tug.



"I've been describing it as a parody of heroes and anybody who's foolish enough to believe in them," reveals Hempel.

After a stint pencilling the oh so-literary *Sandman*, Hempel is clearly enjoying the chance to use all those dick jokes he has saved up.

lem with that was that Gregory didn't really talk. There are certain similarities between Gregory and the young groundhog in *Pogo* who just sat around in a diaper, looking very cute and speaking in consonants. I always thought Walt Kelly didn't explore that character enough, and then *I* tried a similar type of character and ran into the same type of roadblocks that he did. A non-verbal character can only communicate but so well with the people around him. You're limited to facial expressions, or the things he says that can be figured out in context. There's a lot you can do, but by the time I got to *Gregory IV*, I had run out of ideas for things to do. I constantly had to place him in different situations and see how he behaved."

Although the rights to *Gregory* are still tied up with DC Comics, Hempel doesn't plan to do more unless he comes up with some fresh ideas. "It was a very convenient excuse [running out of ideas], because about that time I was getting fed up with working for DC and not making enough money and encountering other problems connected with a large publisher. I was also finishing up *Gregory IV*, which I considered to be my last volume for at least a while," says Hempel. "I had also gotten the *Sandman* gig, so I thought I would do that for a while. I figured it would do a lot for me in terms of name recognition, and I would get to work with Neil Gaiman on a book I like. What could be better? It just fell into my lap!"

Hempel is happy to be doing his own creations, though he enjoyed drawing *Sandman*—despite the trepidations of Gaiman fans. "Even though it was a rewarding experience, my ultimate goal has always been to do my own work," says Hempel. "I think it scared the living daylights out of people who just knew me from *Gregory*! If I was a heavy-duty *Sandman* fanatic, I would have filled my pants! Many professionals and fans loved it right away, but a good number of fans were rubbed the wrong way by the simply stated, expressive way in which I drew the book. At one point, the criticisms stopped, and people starting coming up to me at conventions saying, 'Gee, I really hated your stuff when I first saw it, but now, I really like it a lot!' "

TUG & buster came along when Hempel was searching for a project after *Sandman*—a tough act to follow by anyone's standards, and so Hempel decided on something as different as possible. "When *Sandman* ended, I didn't know what I was going to be doing next," says Hempel. "Mark Wheatley said I should try publishing myself, and that's what I'm doing!"

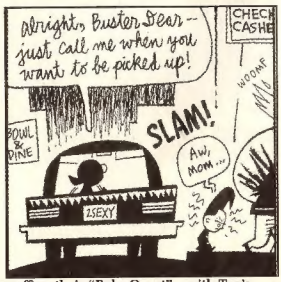
He hasn't been at it long enough to have made any great discoveries about self-publishing, but despite today's tenuous comic book market, he's confident that *TUG & buster* can carve its own niche because it's different from the usual superhero slugfests.

Hempel is also encouraged by Hollywood's overtures toward *Gregory*. He says MTV is looking at *Gregory* as a possible animated series, and although the deal is far from done, he would love to see his lovable misfit starring in a black-and-white cartoon.

In the meantime, Hempel is concentrating on *TUG & buster*. "I've always had a fondness for childlike characters, characters with foibles and weaknesses that are extremely human," concludes Marc Hempel. "Because of those things, the reader tends to really empathize with the characters. I think readers prefer to read about a loser, rather than a winner, because they make far more interesting characters.

"If you're going to be small, weak and inadequate, probably the best advice I can give is to be *100 percent* small, weak and inadequate! But Buster is trying to compensate for it, and be something that's light years removed from anything he could ever dream of accomplishing in his lifetime. The struggle seems so pathetic and useless, and that's where much of the humor comes from, conflicting with that.

"As in my other projects, all of my characters are fragments of my personality, and each specific character has a specific job to do. Hopefully by the time I die, I'll have expressed all of them. If I wasn't doing comics, I would probably be in therapy!"



The incredible "Tugmobile" whisks our heroes off on their "Babe Quest"—with Tug's mom at the wheel!

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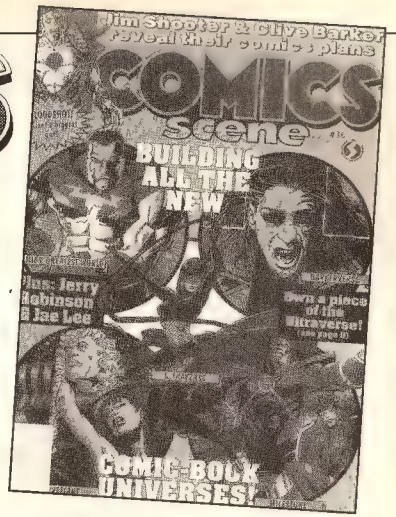
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#40 Animated *Batman* movie. **$7.**

#41 February '94. **$7.**

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"YOU'D BE WORTH A LOT MORE, IF YOU WERE GOLD."

GALACTUS AT McDONALD'S.

...I don't know, maybe it was the jet-lag, but a couple of points that I was trying to make in last issue's interview (CS #53) sounded pretty muddled.

What I was trying to say was this: Animators at Walt Disney Feature Animation have more freedom to interpret their scenes than their counterparts working in television animation. They begin their scenes with a blank sheet of paper, whereas animators in TV are given character layouts as guides for their animation.

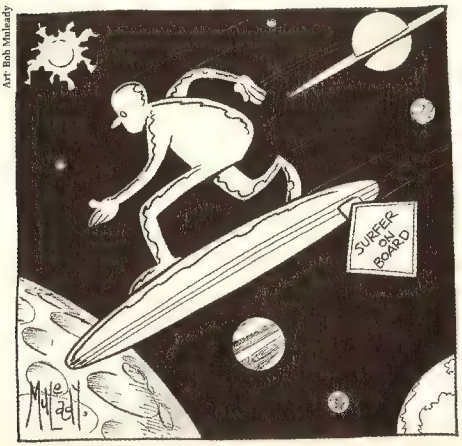
And for the record, Tim Hauser wrote (in words) a synopsis for "Runaway Brain" based on a drawing I had done of a monster Mickey Mouse. The storyboard artist then "wrote" the cartoon in storyboard form. Were "Runaway Brain" a feature-length cartoon, I most definitely would have worked from a script.

Lastly, Dr. Ecks was the *original* name for Dr. Frankenollie, not Dr. X.

Thanks for letting me clear up these points.

Chris Bailey, Director
"Runaway Brain"

...It is a great surprise to find out that *Batman IV* will be out in summer '97. It's no surprise that Val Kilmer, Chris O'Donnell and Joel Schumacher will all return. While many hold their breath for the return of the Joker and Catwoman, the teaming of Mr. Freeze and the Mad Hatter in the newest installment may prove to be very intriguing. Patrick Stewart could be Mr. Freeze. He's a good choice, although I cannot stress enough to Schumacher to *please* keep Mr. Freeze somber and tragic, as he was in *The Animated Series*—please do not make him another Joker as you did to Two-Face!! The crazy/funny villain should be the Mad Hatter, and as someone pointed out to me, the actor most suited to play the role is our old Lettering pal, Mickey Dolenz. Using the animated Jervis Tetch as a model, Dolenz is visually perfect for the character, and he has that Jack Nicholson/ Jim Carrey/Robin Williams insane, high energy performance that's perfect for these villains.



For Bruce's love interest, reports of Demi Moore, perhaps playing Poison Ivy (making it a trio of villains), sound exciting, and for Dick's love interest, Alicia Silverstone would be absolutely perfect! Of course, I would love to see Sam Hamm return to scripting duties, and please use the Danny Elfman theme over the opening credits at the very least.

Finally, I hope that the Batman will wear his traditional costume, as opposed to the overly futuristic "sonar suit" he wore in the finale of *Batman Forever*. The one exception being that they should carry the Bat-minus-yellow oval chest emblem to the regular suit.

Lee Solomon
Sterling Hts., MI

...In light of many bad box-office duds that somehow spawn sequels, what are the chances of Disney producing another *Rocketeer* movie?

OK, the advertising *and* merchandising for *The Rocketeer* were both handled badly. There was *no* real promotion, and the commercials and movie posters (while looking cool) didn't strike great anticipation into the hearts of kids

and younger teens.

The script, casting and movie itself were excellent. It could have used more action, maybe a Doc Savage cameo, but overall it was a good piece of filmmaking.

I know that Dark Horse Comics is now publishing *The Rocketeer Adventure Magazine*. With the success they have had with films (*The Mask*, *TimeCop*, *Barb Wire*) maybe they could acquire the rights and do a better job?

Patrick J. Nestor Jr.
85 Bobolink Lane
Levittown, NY 11756

...Some time ago a fan was wondering why *The Shadow* has not caught on in recent years. *The Shadow* has now been reduced to a figure of nostalgia. The only reason that he is kept around is that he is important for merchandising and licensing. *The Shadow* is still famous, but comparatively few Shadow fans are under age 36.

I think that part of the reason is precedence. If *The Shadow* had been kept going in continuous publication, more fans would be familiar with him, even younger fans. Many younger fans seem to think that The Shadow is a rip-off of Batman. Many do not realize that The Shadow was an *inspiration* for Batman.

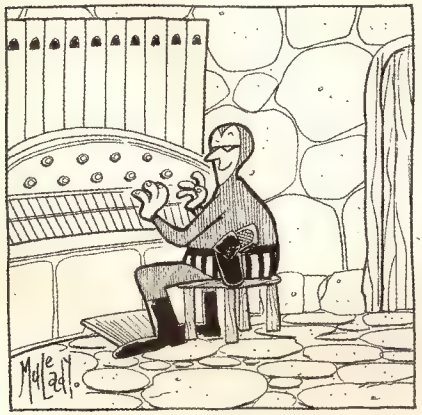
A bigger reason is that the owners of the copyright to *The Shadow*, Advance Magazine Publishers (formerly Condé Nast) have yet to find a comic book company that is very concerned with publishing *The Shadow*. All the companies so far (DC, Marvel, Dark Horse and Archie) who have published *The Shadow* do not place him as a priority character. They do not consider him a big deal. DC was more concerned with releasing a multitude of worthless specials, miniseries, graphic novels, etc. starring "Merchandising Man B" and "Merchandising Man S" (i.e. Batman and Superman). If Advance could get a company that cares about publishing *The Shadow* as much as Now cared about publishing the *Green Hornet*, *The Shadow* would do better.

On the other hand, perhaps Advance Magazine Publishers could simply just publish *The Shadow* comic books themselves. Maybe the reason that they do not is that they want to save face.

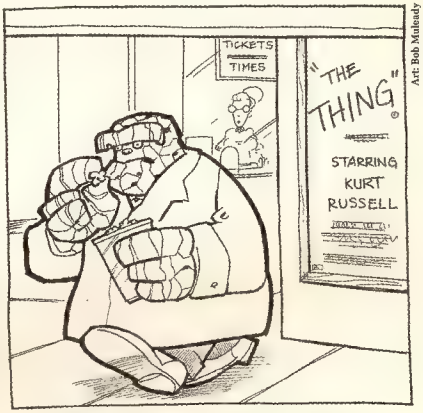
Another big problem with The Shadow is that many modern *Shadow* comic books, and the movie, were set in the past. This is apparently for merchandising and also to market towards nostalgic customers. The Alec Baldwin movie didn't do well, partly because of this. (It also was thought to be poorly written.) Most comic book fans do not seem to go for stories set in the '30s or '40s, except on a one-shot basis. (The Green Hornet also relies on nostalgia for readers, but the source of this nostalgia is mostly the Bruce Lee series of the '60s, and no one wants to do '60s period pieces.") While I know that the original Shadow stories were set in the '30s and '40s, that was because those were the years in which they were written and published. It was not the same as the case of the Lone Ranger, who was made in the '30s but set in the Old West. Perhaps *The Shadow* would do better if he were set in contemporary times.

John McDonagh
82 Church Street
Milton, MA 02186

Tarzan meets Calamity Jane.



THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA.



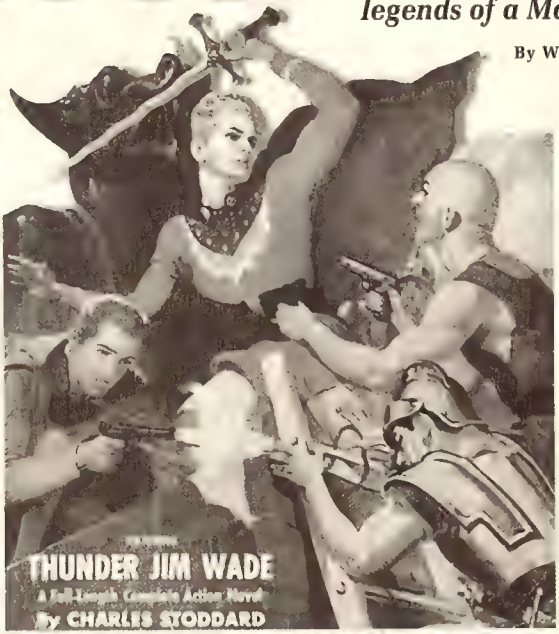
"WELL, THAT WAS A DISAPPOINTMENT!"

MYTH MAKER

Sixty years ago, writer/editor Mort Weisinger helped fashion fanzines & the legends of a Man of Steel.

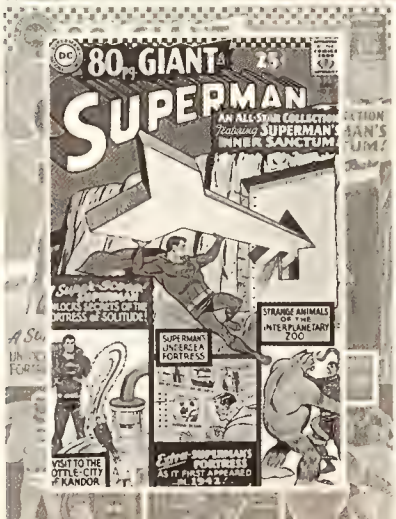
By WILL MURRAY

This article is based on Will Murray's unpublished 1975 interview with Mort Weisinger (who died in 1978), augmented by additional published quotes from other sources (as credited herein).



In the entwined fields of science fiction and comic books, writer/editor Mort Weisinger (pronounced Wise-in-ger) remains one of the most influential and controversial figures. During the 1930s, he edited some of the most notoriously juvenile SF pulps ever published, leaving the field in 1941 to edit *Superman* comics, where he enjoyed a dual reputation as a plotting genius and a grueling taskmaster until his retirement. He co-edited the first SF fanzine, penned the first history of the field, invented BEMs (Bug-Eyed Monsters) and, perhaps more than anyone other than his creators, elevated Superman from four-color novelty to modern myth.

Mort Weisinger ushered in an age of Bug-Eyed Monsters and steel-jawed heroes.



For Weisinger, who was born on April 25, 1915 and died May 7, 1978, his lifelong interest in SF was triggered when he borrowed the August 1928 *Amazing Stories* from his summer camp counselor. Portentously, the issue contained the seminal Buck Rogers story, "Armageddon 2419," and the first installment of E.E. Smith's classic *The Skylark of Space*.

In December 1929, his interest in SF led Weisinger to join an early New York-based SF fan club, the Scienceers, where he met lifelong friend Julius Schwartz. Together with fellow fan Allen Glasser, they launched a bulletin, *The Comet*, designed to put them in touch with the fledgling SF community. This led directly to the *first* fan magazine devoted to SF, *The Time Traveler*, which all three men edited, and for which Weisinger penned a gossip column, "Out of the Ether."

Weisinger is, of course, best known for his legendary tenure helming the comic-book exploits of Superman.

Design & Layout: Saul Allen

Initially, Weisinger wanted to be a doctor. His "The Price of Peace," first published as a privately-printed pamphlet, saw professional print in the November 1933 *Amazing Stories*, and prompted a change in goals. Now he wanted to write.

For the next three years, Weisinger contributed stories to pulps as diverse as *Wonder Stories* and *Secret Agent X*, as well as doing yeoman service on a new fanzine, *The Science Fiction Digest*, which featured news gathered by Weisinger, interviews conducted by him and fiction by professional writers.

After his success as a pulp editor with *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, Weisinger started *Startling Stories* in 1938.

"I did a whole article for the *Author and Journalist*," Weisinger recalled in 1975. "The very first article I ever sold was called 'Why They Use Pen Names.' And I told Sax Rohmer's real name, and *why* he used a pseudonym. I wrote to a lot of writers and found out. There's this one guy, Harold de Polo; whenever he would have two stories in one issue, the editor would say, 'Give me a pseudonym for the second story.' He would say, 'Use Phillip Space'—fill up space! It was the first time I ever got fan mail. It was so popular, they asked me for a sequel, 'Pseudonym Sidelights.' "

Their many contacts in the field led Weisinger and Schwartz to launch the first literary agency specializing in SF, the Solar Sales Service, in 1935. They were soon handling such coming legends as H.P. Lovecraft, Edmond Hamilton, Henry Kuttner, Robert Bloch and Stanley G. Weinbaum.

One of the writers whom Weisinger became friendly with was Lester Dent (CS #28), then writing Doc Savage. Dent was to become an important influence on the young writer.

"I was a kid of about 18," Weisinger recalled, "I was still going to NYU, and I wrote pulp stories and science-fiction stories in my spare time. Dent had a boat, the *Albatross*, and he invited me out on the boat for the weekend. We went from Long Island to Connecticut. My job was to cook. They had some liquid fuel I overpoured and the first thing I knew, it went up in flames! They had to use fire extinguishers to douse it!"

Weisinger remembered Dent with something akin to awe. "He was like a corsair come to life. He was tall and he was brawny. And he was industrious. He knew mining and navigation. Dent had a formula he used for every one of his novels. He claimed you should always have an exotic locale, and the mystery should be: Who did it and why did he do it? A unique murder method. How did he do it? And in every book a unique treasure.

"These treasures ran the spectrum. I remember one novel where the treasure was—bat shit! Guano droppings. It was used for fertilizer—a very valuable fertilizer. There were caves full of it. Thousands of tons of the stuff. Since time immemorial, bats have been feathering the nest, so to speak."

In 1939, Weisinger initiated a new pulp SF hero, Captain Future, written by Edmond Hamilton.

In 1936, hearing that Standard Publications had an editorial vacancy, Weisinger approached editor-in-chief Leo Margulies, and got the job. He was only 20. Margulies had reason to remember Weisinger—who had sold a story to Margulies' *Popular Detective* in 1934.

"They had a contest," Weisinger explained. "A nickel a word for every word you *don't* write under 1000 words. So, I wrote one called 'Rope Enough' at 500 words. I *didn't* write 500, so I got $25. And my gimmick was this gangster is taking another guy—he's going to kill him—on the subway. The guy says, 'Can I smoke, I'm a condemned man.' The gangster says, 'Go ahead.' So the guy smokes and the next thing you know, 'You're under arrest.' It's the subway guard. 'Don't you know it's against the law to smoke on the subway?' The gangster explains, 'He was always razzing my cheap cigars. He called them El Ropos.' The guy said, 'Well, I gave you rope enough and you hung yourself!' "

At Standard Publications, Weisinger gained "great experience" editing magazines such as *G-Men*.

Standard Publications had been launched by publisher Ned Pines in 1932 at the request of the American News Distribution Company, which had just lost the lucrative Street & Smith account. By 1936, they were publishing a string of pulps in every genre except the one in which Weisinger specialized. That would soon change.

The same year Weisinger came aboard, Pines bought the failing *Won-*

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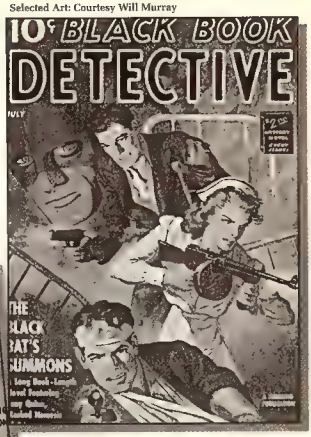
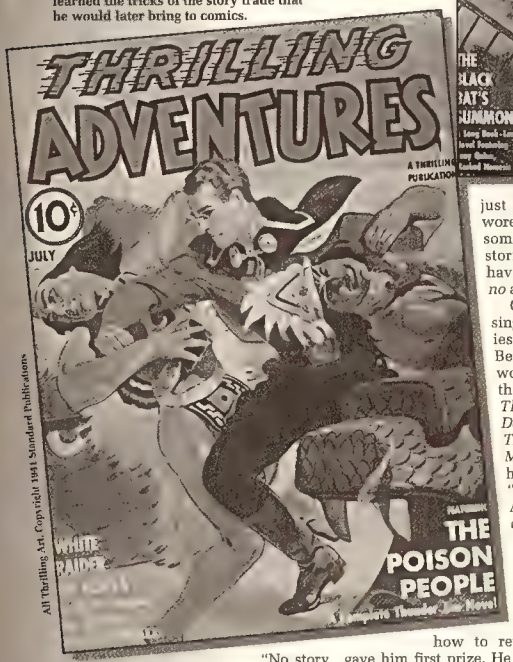


There were echoes of Batman-yet-to-come in Weisinger's *Black Book Detective*, featuring the mysterious Black Bat.

der Stories from pioneering SF publisher Hugo Gernsback. It was quickly renamed *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. Since only Weisinger had experience in the genre, editing the revamped title fell to him by default. Normally, no one editor had responsibility for any Standard title, and the masthead actually credited the non-existent Harvey Burns as editor.

While working at Standard, Weisinger learned the tricks of the story trade that he would later bring to comics.



All Thrilling Art, Copyright 1941 Standard Publications

good science fiction, but if you didn't read it, you would think that *Thrilling Wonder Stories* was a blood and thunder magazine. That was just the mask it wore. Inside I had some damn good stories. I would have stories with *no* action at all."

One of Weisinger's discoveries was Alfred Bester, who would later pen the SF classics *The Stars, My Destination* and *The Demolished Man*. "I bought his first story, 'The Broken Axiom.' I ran a contest in *Thrilling Wonder Stories* for amateurs. His was the best. I called him in and told him how to rewrite it. And gave him first prize. He had a job as a publicity agent. I told him, 'If you quit your job, I'll guarantee you a certain amount of assignments,' and he did. So, I launched him."

The contest inadvertently launched another major SF career. Robert Heinlein's first story, "Life Line," was written for the contest, but when Heinlein realized that John W. Campbell paid more, he submitted it to Campbell's *Astounding* instead.

Thrilling Wonder Stories became so successful, Weisinger added *Startling Stories* in 1938, using a semi-humorous title from a story he had written years before. Then in 1939, he launched *Captain Future*. The concept was hatched at the First World Science Fiction Convention in New York, when Leo Margulies, impressed by the sincerity of SF fans, drew Weisinger aside and instructed him to create a new SF hero.

"I had the feeling that a personality character and a team—an SF parallel to Doc Savage—would go," recalled Weisinger. "And we gave him some unique props: a robot, an android and a living brain. He did well while Ed Hamilton was writing them."

Weisinger's original prospectus was called Mr. Future. It featured a futuristic mutant superhero who fought crime on Earth. When Hamilton was hired to pen the series, he gave it more of a space opera flavor, and discarded several Weisinger concepts, later to surface in *Superman*.

But, Weisinger's career at Standard wasn't limited to SF. "I edited *Thrilling Wonder Stories, Startling Stories, Captain Future, G-Men, Thrilling Detective,*

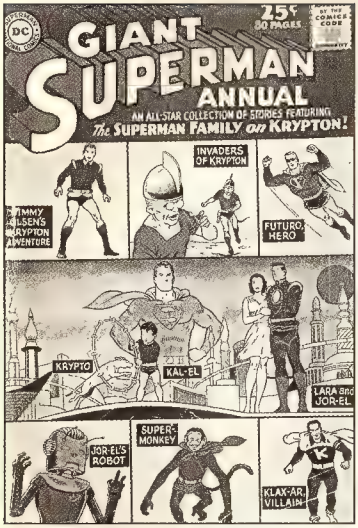
Art Copyright 1934 Phantom Detective Inc.

"No story could be bought unless three editors OKed it," Weisinger explained. "I had a very good batting average. When I recommended something, generally it was easy to pick up two other OKs."

Thanks to his SF background, Weisinger became editor in fact, as well as name, of *Thrilling Wonder*. However, the magazine soon earned a reputation as a juvenile market that Weisinger claimed was undeserved.

"Pines didn't know anything about the business. He would call me in on the carpet about covers. He would want a monster on every cover. That's why I created the BEM—the Bug-Eyed Monster. I couldn't get over to him that some of these covers would be a hell of a lot more provocative *without* a monster. I would have to slip in what I would call

According to Weisinger, versatility and the ability to work variations on the same story gimmick were the key to editing adventure.



Weisinger believed his greatest contribution to Superman was establishing the character's extensive mythology.

Phantom Detective, Black Book Detective, Popular Detective, Thrilling Adventures and *Thrilling Mystery*," he recounted. "Then, I read on all of them, in addition to the ones that I edited, did the copy-editing and worked with the writers.

"It was a very good system," Weisinger added, "because with the training you had there, you were proficient enough to work in any type of medium—love stories, ghost stories, sports stories, science fiction. You were a switch hitter, so to speak. It was great experience you could never get anywhere else. But when it came to making money, it was lousy.

"I made $15 a week," Weisinger recalled wryly. "I gave my parents $12 a week. This was during the Depression. And out of that $3, I had carfare from New Jersey to my office, including lunch every day. And I wrote a few departments that would pay for my room in the daytime. Ned Pines called me into the office and said, 'I'm going to give you a $5 raise, but don't tell anyone. It's supposed to be a secret.' I said, 'Don't worry, I would be ashamed to tell anyone I had got a $5 raise.' "

It was at Standard that Weisinger learned tricks of the story trade that he would later bring to *Superman*. "We were constructionists," he explained. "We studied Alexandre Dumas, Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, Nick Carter, Edgar Rice Burroughs. We believed a story had a beginning, a middle and an end. And with gimmicks. There was not one story sold that we didn't invent gimmicks for. The gimmicks were very much along the lines of Sherlock Holmes. The deduction. I remember a Phantom Detective gimmick. He's in a trap, gas is coming into the room, what is he going to do? Well, he stands on tiptoe, gets a match and lights the gas. They come in, expect to find him dead, and he jumps them!

"I remember one gag we used three times," Weisinger added. "A guy is kidnapped. He's hidden in a cellar and later released for ransom. He brings the police back to the hideout. How did he know? In one story, he saw the gas meter. So, he memorized the numbers and they traced the gas meter. In the second, he saw an old typewriter and remembered its serial number. They traced the typewriter. In the third, he saw a dog with a license. We were able to milk that three times!

"These are things the readers appreciate. You think of your gimmick and write your story from that. As I said, we were constructionists. And we knew what a story was. You didn't have to tell a writer our slant. They knew this—instinctively and by study. And the proof of the pudding is that each and every one of them became such a master of his craft that they eventually went off to Hollywood and made a good living."

With the pressure of nearly 40 Standard magazines to oversee, Weisinger found himself an innovator. "In those days, we weren't as much into covers as we are today. The covers would be more or less symbolic of subtle violence. We didn't have to sync the cover and the novel. So, they could write anything, more or less. We would show a knife pointing at the hero or something like that. And later when I found out what publishing was about and I realized that sales could be hooked to covers, I started this whole evolution in the industry. Think of the cover first, and get a story written around it instead of waiting 'til it's all done and painting yourself into a corner, and asking, 'What is my cover going to be?'

"That," Weisinger said proudly, "was a creative contribution to the whole field."

Much of Weisinger's editorial responsibility was drudge work, including riding herd on the lead novels featuring a Shadow clone called the Phantom Detective, and a pulp crime-buster who would eerily mirror Batman—the Black Bat (CS #8).

"They were completely interchangeable," Weisinger recalled. "It's like saying, do you want ham or bacon and eggs? One day I'm on Black Bat and the other I'm on Phantom. Many of them were rewritten in the office by me and the other editors to get them in shape. But they were damn good plots."

While now-forgotten writers like D.L. Champion and Norman A. Daniels wrote those characters, more noteworthy pulpsters also hid behind the house names of G. Wayman Jones and Robert Wallace.

"Norvell Page wrote some," Weisinger revealed. "He had written *The Spider*, you know, and I gave him a few assignments. It was very hush-hush. He didn't want to alienate his relationship with Popular Publications. And Emile C. Tepperman and Paul Ernst—they had practically come in

The relationship between Superman and Lois Lane is still a great love story—one Weisinger compared to Romeo and Juliet.

SUPERMAN'S GIRL FRIEND
LOIS LANE
12¢
APR. NO. 28
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Featuring "LOIS LANE'S REVENGE on SUPERMAN!"
NOW BE A GOOD LITTLE SUPERMAN AND TELL AUNTIE LOIS IF YOUR X-RAY VISION HAS SPOTTED THE BANK ROBBERS' LOOT INSIDE THEIR HIDEOUT!
GRRR... LOIS IS BLACKMAILING ME! I MUST HELP HER GET SCOOPS OR SHE'LL NEVER GIVE ME THE ANTIDOTE TO THE YOUTH SERUM THAT TURNED ME INTO A BABY!
SUPER-SERUM
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ACTION COMICS
12¢
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Featuring "The DEATH of LUTHOR!"
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
O, NOBLE LUTHOR! WE, YOUR FRIENDS OF OTHER WORLDS, COME TO DELIVER A FINAL TRIBUTE!
THESE FOOLS DON'T SUSPECT WE'RE REALLY THE GREATEST CRIMINALS IN THE UNIVERSE!
WELL SPOKEN, BRAINIAC! THIS VILLAIN, SUPERMAN, WILL PAY FOR MURDERING LUTHOR!
I DIDN'T MURDER HIM... BUT NO ONE ON THIS WORLD WILL BELIEVE ME!

Of his old-line writers, Weisinger considered Hamilton and Superman co-creator Jerry Siegel (author of "Death of Luthor") the best.

wearing masks. But they knew they could get a fast check."

Along with fellow editors Bernard Breslauer and Jack Schiff, Weisinger toiled at this thankless task for seven years. The itch to write came over him again and with Schiff, he co-plotted a *Doc Savage* novel they would ghost for Lester Dent. But the project hit a snag, and Dent wrote *Birds of Death* from their idea.

"The only world my friends and I knew was pulp," Weisinger complained at the time. "Every time I pressed a typewriter key, out rolled, 'The body fell to the floor with a dull, sickening thud.' "

Relief came from an unlikely source, writer Whitney Ellsworth. "Whit came from California and knew Leo Margulies," Weisinger reminisced. "Leo said to me, 'Why don't you try Whit on *Black Bat*?' So I gave him a springboard and he wrote half of it. He brought in the half and I read it. Then, he called me up and asked, 'How is it?' I said, 'Well, over here this has to be changed...' He cut me off and said, 'Well, stick it up your ass. Forget it.' I said, 'Wait a minute. I like it! Those are little things. I'm going to take care of it myself. I want you to finish it.' I gave him the advance and he started writing for me, and he did all *Black Bats* [and at least two *Phantom Detectives*].

"Then one day we were out to lunch and he said to me, 'How much are you making a week?' I said $35. So, he said, 'How would you like $50?' That was a lot of money then. I said, 'What's the job?' He said, 'Be editor of *Superman*. What I want you to do is shape up *Batman* and other magazines because *Superman* is in a groove with [co-creator/writer] Jerry Siegel. By the way, he recommended you.' Siegel and I were old friends. We used to work on a fan magazine together.

"I thought, 'What do I know about comic books?' So, I called up Otto Binder. He gave me a crash course in about two hours. 'It's very simple,' he said. 'There's a fight, the hero hits the villain on the head with a lamp and says, "Lights out for you!" ' Then, I read it and got my own perspective. And I thought, 'What they need are more stories and plots.' "

On his first day, Weisinger was chagrined to discover he had no office—only a desk, a typewriter and instructions to sit down promptly and create three new characters for *More Fun Comics*. That day he created Aquaman, Green Arrow and Johnny Quick. They were like no characters he had worked on before, with good reason.

"Ned Pines resented very much that I left him," Weisinger noted. "Whit got so worried that he [Pines] would monitor all the magazines I worked on. If I lifted so much as one gimmick or idea, there would be a big lawsuit. I had to be on my toes. I had to adapt my pulp background in a way that wouldn't infringe on what I had done previously."

Weisinger's stint at National lasted until July 1942, when he was drafted. After basic training, he found himself assigned to Army Public Relations, working out of Yale University. Freed of editorial responsibilities, he began freelancing magazine articles based on his experiences, dabbled in fiction and found time to maintain his relationship with the Man of Steel.

"One stunt I particularly enjoyed was getting Superman to come to Yale—literally," Weisinger explained in his 1944 *Writer's Digest* article, "A Yank at Yale." "I dreamed up a rough outline for a story wherein Clark Kent gets assigned to investigate training conditions at the AAF School at Yale for his paper. Whit Ellsworth came up here for the story conference, kicked the plot around until we had ironed out all the wrinkles. The finished product was a 'Keep 'em Flying' story that has Superman proving that the job of a ground crew technician can be just as glamorous as flying a P-38 through enemy ack-ack [anti-aircraft gunfire]. Although he didn't give me any stripes for the job, they tell me that Major General Walter R. Weaver, boss of our Command at the

time, got a great kick out of the story when it appeared in print."

The story, "I Sustain the Wings," appeared in *Superman* #25—one of the rare times when Weisinger actually wrote a comics story. The title came from an Air Force radio show he wrote for Glenn Miller.

Before leaving National, Weisinger had arranged with Standard-editor-turned-*Batman*-writer Jack Schiff to hold down his job. When Weisinger returned from the service, the two shared the responsibility for *Superman* and *Batman*, switching off much as they did in their pulp days.

With the advent of the *Superman* TV show in 1951, Weisinger took increased responsibility for *Superman* while Schiff handled the *Batman* titles. Weisinger found himself overseeing a new Superman boom, spending his summers in Hollywood as story editor, working with Ellsworth, who produced. It was an exciting time.

"On the way out to the coast," he told *Amazing World of DC Comics*, "we sat in a roomette on a train with the tape recorder and plotted about 15 stories for the series. I met George Reeves, the actor who played Superman, and he was one helluva nice guy—very, very unaffected. The amazing thing was that when you met Reeves, you said, 'My Lord, it's Clark Kent!' It was like seeing Clark step out of the comic pages into three dimensions."

Hoax or imaginary story? Weisinger was proud of his "innovative" way of presenting otherwise impossible (or implausible) yarns.

There Weisinger discovered such scripters as Jackson (*Perry Mason*) Gillis and Peggy (*Dennis the Menace*) Chantler, and arranged for Superman to appear on a now-classic episode of *I Love Lucy*.

Once the show had run its course, Ellsworth decided to retire, leaving Weisinger with absolute control of the Superman titles, which included the flagship *Superman*, *Action Comics*, *Adventure Comics* and *Jimmy Olsen*—which Weisinger had launched in 1954 over the deep reservations of his superiors.

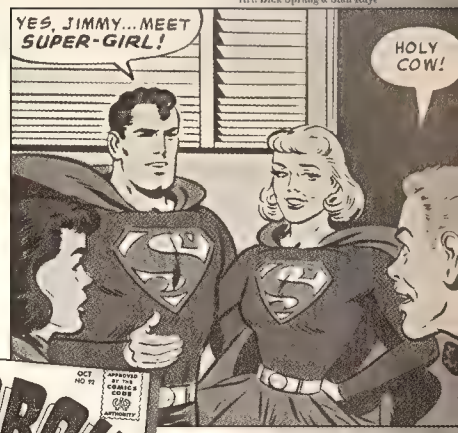
Freed to direct Superman's destiny as he saw fit, Weisinger and his writers, who included *Captain Future*'s Edmond Hamilton and returning Superman originator Jerry Siegel, introduced a plethora of new characters and impedimenta.

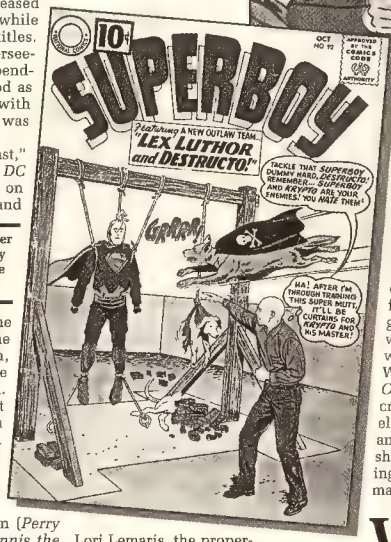
Under Weisinger's stewardship, the Superman family continued to grow. He originated Supergirl, Krypto and Bizarro.

"I originated such characters as Bizarro, Krypto, Supergirl, Superbaby, etc., and assigned them to various writers for scripting," Weisinger told *The Legion Outpost* in 1974. "I also invented the Bottle of Kandor, the Phantom Zone, the 'LL' running gag—Lois Lane, Lana Lang, Lori Lemaris, the properties of the various forms of Kryptonite—with the exception of Green Kryptonite, which was the invention of Robert Maxwell, producer of the *Superman* radio series; Maxwell also introduced Jimmy Olsen there. I think the innovation I'm proudest of was the use of the imaginary story to present stories that weren't otherwise possible. And I also created the series, 'Tales of Krypton.' "

Virtually all of these ideas were brought in between 1959 and 1960. One notorious element Weisinger never publicly took credit for was Superman's Fortress of Solitude—a concept he lifted wholesale from *Doc Savage*, right down to the Arctic locale. Few know that Superman's Fortress was inspired by Lester Dent's unpublished version of the refuge, which was concealed in a hollow volcano. Supergirl was likewise inspired by Doc's feisty cousin, Patricia Savage.

Art: Dick Sprang & Stan Kaye

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Other elements, such as Superman's use of robot doubles and the Legion of Superheroes' shapeshifting pet, Proty, were originally conceived by Weisinger for *Captain Future*. "I think my greatest contribution to Superman was to give him a 'mythology' which covered all bases," Weisinger observed in *The Legion Outpost*. "All this makes Superman credible. I also went to lengths to elaborate on the 'Superman family,' and cross-pollinated these relationships by simultaneously interweaving their causes and effects in [other] magazines."

While at DC, Weisinger discovered and cultivated new writing talents such as Cary Bates, E. Nelson Bridwell and the writer/editor/publisher who may be the closest thing to a modern Mort Weisinger, Jim Shooter. Of his old-line writers, he thought Hamilton and Siegel were the best.

"Jerry, whom I consider the most competent of all the Superman writers," Weisinger told *The Legion Outpost*, "established the foundation for the series. What his successors did was just embroidery, including my own contributions. Siegel was the best emotional writer of them all—as in the unforgettable 'Death of Luthor.'

"Everyone of our school graduated," he pointed out. "That's why I say

(continued on page 60)

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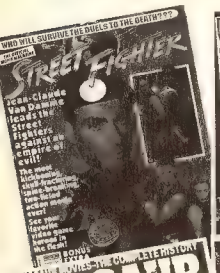

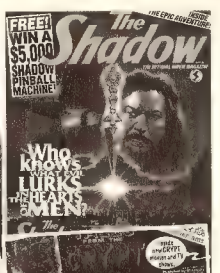

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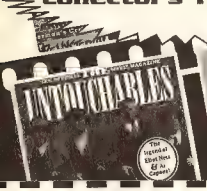

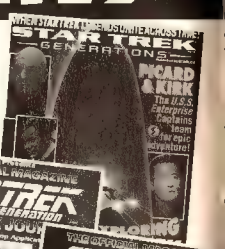

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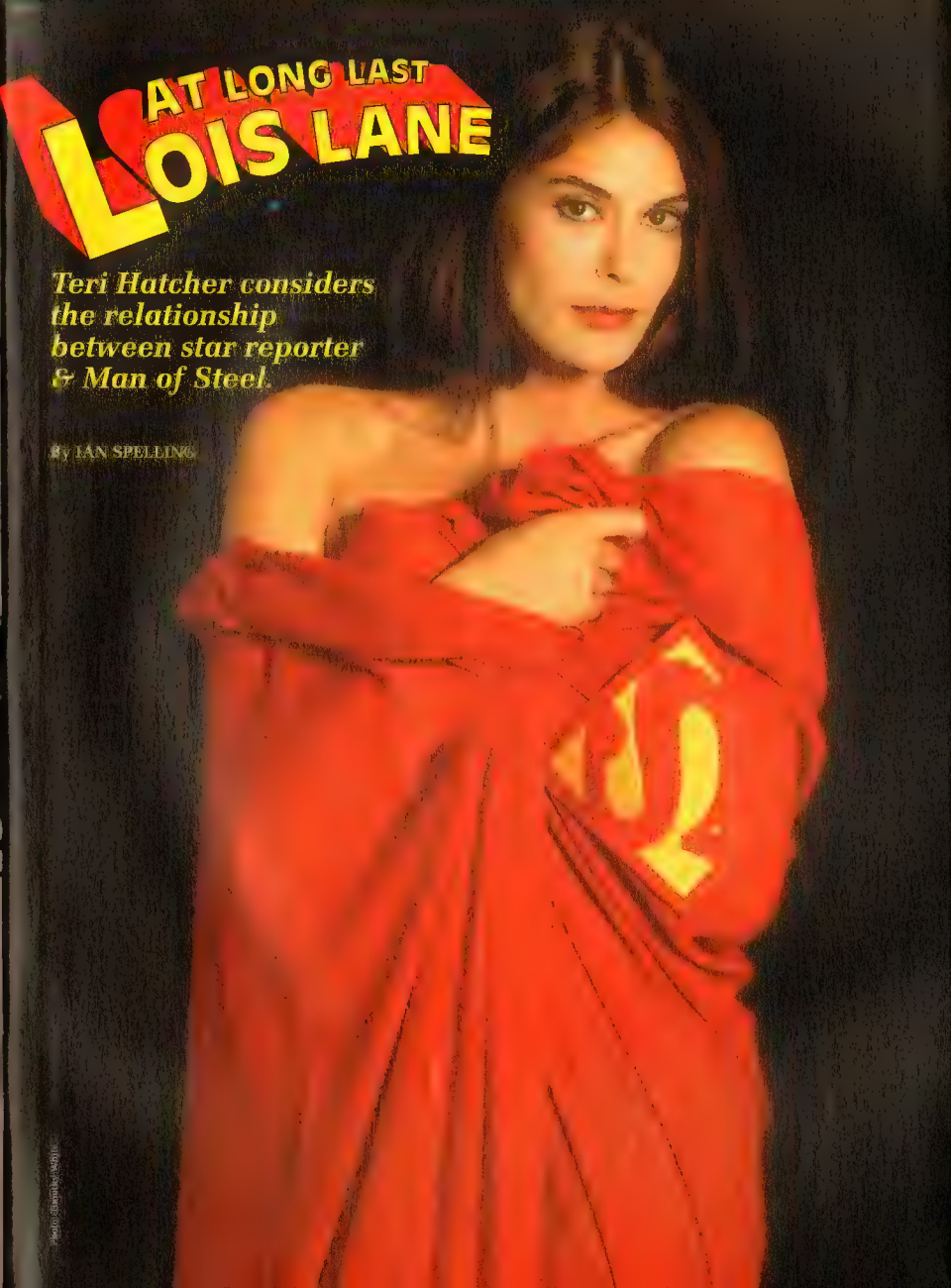
AT LONG LAST LOIS LANE

Teri Hatcher considers the relationship between star reporter & Man of Steel.

By IAN SPELLING



All Photos: Copyright 1995 Capital Cities/ABC, Inc. Photo: Gregory Heisler

The long wait is over. From the set of *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*, Teri Hatcher tells us that she has been quite busy over the past two years...

It seemed that everything but Kryptonite stood in the way of tracking down a long-awaited interview with Teri Hatcher, the spirited Lois Lane on *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*. Scheduling conflicts, her real-life wedding, 16-hour *Lois & Clark* production days and the filming of two extra-curricular movies all had caused super headaches for nearly two years. Now, Hatcher is on the phone, calling during a supposed half-hour break in the shooting of *Lois & Clark*.

Finally! At long last! Then, just six minutes into the conversation, Hatcher is interrupted by an assistant. They need her back on the set. "I am *so, so* sorry," she says with total conviction. "Do you want to do this tomorrow instead?" After all this time? After coming so close? Hatcher ponders the situation for a moment, then, fortunately, concurs. "Can we do it in five- or 10-minute pieces between scenes?" she asks. "I'll do it that way if you'll will." And that's the way it is. Every half-hour or so for the next three hours, Hatcher picks up the conversation several times until the first-ever COMICS SCENE interview with Teri Hatcher is finally caught on tape.

That *Lois & Clark* is now in its third season may surprise those pundits who figured the show would crash-land when scheduled opposite the venerable *Murder, She Wrote* and the once eagerly anticipated *seaQuest*. Despite initially mediocre ratings, *Lois & Clark* held its own, eventually outpacing *seaQuest*. Now, as the relationship between Lois and Clark Kent/Superman (Dean Cain) continues to grow more complex, the series is doing quite well and continues to expand its audience base. Hatcher is thrilled by the show's success, but, truth be told, isn't that surprised by its achievements. "I guess I don't get involved in things unless I think they're going to be the best they can be and unless I think they have a chance to be successful. My first clue that something was clicking was when we were shooting the pilot," she recalls. "Everyone felt like there was some sort of special energy that you can't really create inorganically. It just happens. Everyone felt that, so it was pretty exciting.

"Back then, people were saying we were going to run five years, just based on the energy on the set. Then, things began to go through a manipulated stage as the network got more involved. The time slot demanded a certain type of show, as did the competition. Too many cooks got into the kitchen and I think it got drawn away from the purer vision that existed in the pilot. Suddenly, we had our fans and we were building an audience, but I don't think anybody here felt like *Lois & Clark* was necessarily all that it could or should be. This year, Dean and I are very excited by what the show has come around to, which is a show that seems to be

Photo: Bob D'Amico

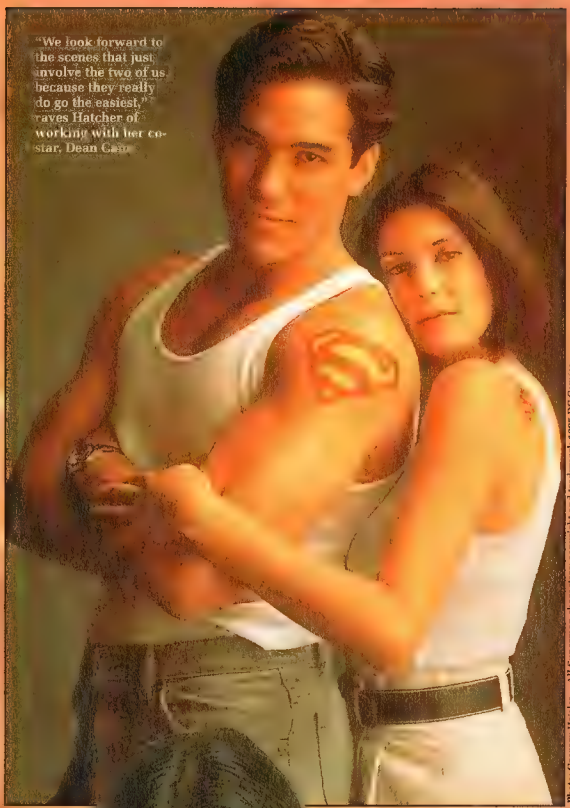
Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

"It was never so much about playing 'Lois Lane' as it was about playing this woman who was a reporter who had this particular relationship," Hatcher says.

"I didn't look at the work of any of the other actresses who have played Lois," Hatcher reveals. "It had to be specifically about *my* unique journey as Lois."

more consistent, has a clearer vision and in some ways seems similar to the pilot."

Still, there is that big question that even the most devout of *Lois & Clark* fans can't help but ask, "What is *Lois & Clark*?" Is it a romantic comedy? A superhero action-adventure with a dollop of romance? Perhaps a combination of those elements and genres? "I think it's many of those things combined, and I think that's what makes *Lois & Clark* one of the hardest shows on television to direct, write for or act in," argues Hatcher, who was born in San Francisco and counts among her pre-*Lois & Clark* credits the films *The Big Picture*, *Soapdish* and *Tango and Cash*, as well as episodes of *Seinfeld* (the woman with the "perfect breasts") and *L.A. Law*. "It's really everything you just said, which I think is also why we have such a wide range of fans. It is a fantasy, first and foremost. It's an action-adventure with romance, too. It's all of those things, equally balanced. I also think it's a fairy-tale story about this relationship between Lois and Clark."



"We look forward to the scenes that just involve the two of us because they really do go the easiest," raves Hatcher of working with her co-star, Dean Cain.

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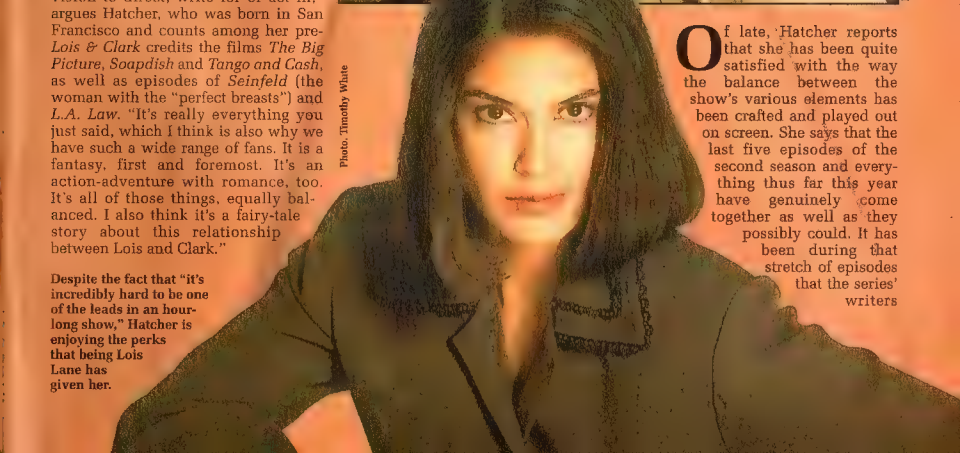
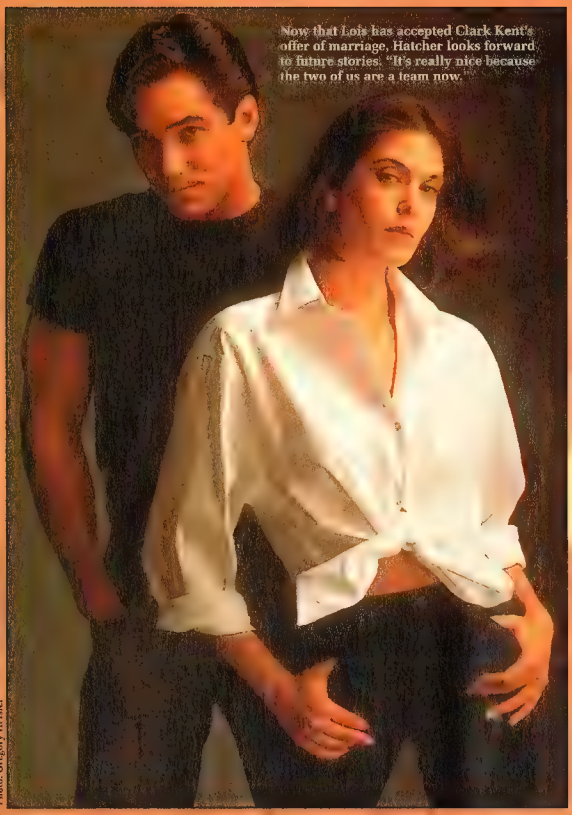


Photo: Timothy White

Despite the fact that "it's incredibly hard to be one of the leads in an hour-long show," Hatcher is enjoying the perks that being Lois Lane has given her.

Of late, Hatcher reports that she has been quite satisfied with the way the balance between the show's various elements has been crafted and played out on screen. She says that the last five episodes of the second season and everything thus far this year have genuinely come together as well as they possibly could. It has been during that stretch of episodes that the series' writers



Now that Lois has accepted Clark Kent's offer of marriage, Hatcher looks forward to future stories. "It's really nice because the two of us are a team now."

Photo: Gregory Heisler

"We can read and react off each other and Dean listens to everything I say," Hatcher offers of her rapport with Cain. "He respects my ideas and I respect his."

Photo: Timothy White

have focused squarely on the Lois-and-Clark bond. As season two came to an end, Lois seemed fairly certain that Clark was indeed Superman. For his part, a rather nervous Clark intended to tell Lois the truth about his identity, then somehow wound up asking her to marry him. Now, third season shows are centering on getting the super duo to the altar and exploring how Lois' knowledge of Clark's secret affects their relationship. "Right now, it's like we're the show that tries to please everybody, as compared to *NYPD Blue* or *ER*, which are dramas intended for a very specific adult audience. Believe it or not," notes the actress, "we *are* considered a drama. That's the category we're in. Our show is trying to reach a family audience and I think it's just a harder thing to do, to please everybody from five to 60 at the same time. But we're trying."

Hatcher compares the relationship between Clark/Superman and Lois at the moment to one of a woman married to a doctor whose beeper goes off constantly, calling him away for duty. It seems whenever Lois and Clark are about to share an intimate moment, Superman must fly off to rescue some victim or stop yet another bad guy. "We're looking at how she's feeling now that her significant other is having to go off all the time on emergencies. At the same time," reasons Hatcher, "it puts Lois in more danger because, now more than ever, someone can get to Superman by getting to her. In terms of the relationship, I think the more you know about somebody, the more vulnerable you are to each other and the more the expectations change. There will be some of that fear of life-long commitment that everybody goes through as they're about to get married.

It's really nice because the two of us are a team now. It's the two of us against the world. Together, they have to keep this secret. So, I think all of that will lead to a lot of fun situations."

Also lending fun to many situations is Hatcher's co-star, Cain. Hatcher says she counts her blessings every day that she and Cain get along as well as they do. If they didn't, the show simply wouldn't work, for there would be no magic, no chemistry. On the personal front, if Hatcher and Cain disliked one another, the already long days on the *Lois & Clark* set would feel oppressively longer. "Dean and I work between 12 and 16 hours a day. We get to a point where we just laugh. We most look forward to the scenes that just involve the two of us, because they really do go the easiest," she asserts. "There are no complications. We can read each other and react off each other and Dean listens to everything I say. He respects my ideas and I respect his. There's not a lot of ego there.

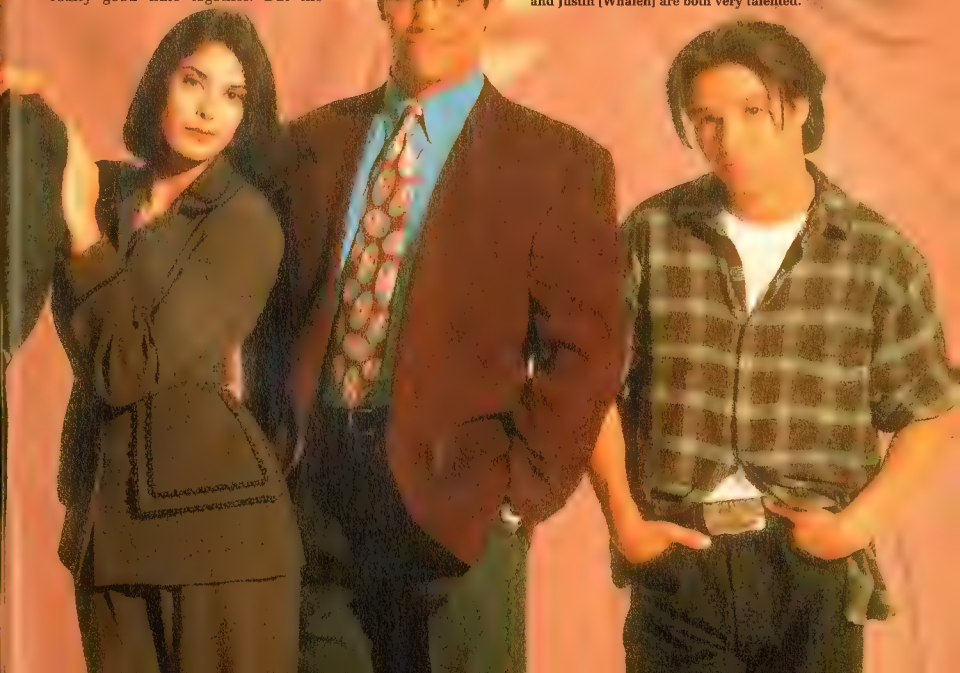
"The more other actors get into a scene, or you add special FX, it gets a little more complicated. You have to deal with more people and their opinions. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that's bad. We have a great crew and a great, great cast. For having to work that many hours a day, we all have a really good time together. But the scenes with Dean are definitely the easiest and the most fun."

That said, Hatcher has nothing but words of praise for Lane Smith and Justin Whalen, who play, respectively, the Elvis-adoring *Daily Planet* Managing Editor Perry White and the eager but trouble-causing cub photographer Jimmy Olsen. "Lane is great, and so is Justin. Everybody brings their own unique energy to a scene and, as an actor, you would never not want to be there to play off them," she explains. "Lane and Justin are both very talented, and Lane is really an incredibly gifted actor. He brings a great credibility to our show and I'm a big fan of his. I love my scenes with him."

As for the show's many guest stars, Hatcher enjoys the process of watching who the producers recruit to fill the villain of the week (or arc) spots. Her dream guests would be Jack Nicholson and Antonio Banderas, but a more likely future villain might be actor John Tenney, her real-life husband. Over the episodes aired so far, such actors as John Shea, Tony (*Beauty & the Beast*) Jay, Denise (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*) Crosby, Farrah Forke, Bronson (*The Stand*) Pinchot, Bruce (*Evil Dead*) Campbell, Peter Boyle, Mac Davis and David Leisure, among many others, have tried either to bring Superman to his knees or to gain control of Metropolis (or, in some cases, the world).

"We do so much work on this show that the second I finish an episode, it goes out of my brain, so, to be honest, I'm not great at remembering everyone who has been on the show. I do know we've had some great people. We just had Shelley Long on, and that was a thrill for me because I think she's a comic genius," she enthuses. "Shelley was so wonderful to everyone and so funny. That's going to be a great episode. She's a villain who creates a Kryptonite laser gun. We had Mac Davis on recently and he was a hoot—just really cool, down-to-Earth and very good. He played a guy who runs one of those love camps where couples go for a weekend to make their relationships better."

Behind the scenes, the changes have been more permanent. Deborah Joy LeVine developed *Lois & Clark* from



"Everybody brings their own unique energy to a scene," explains Hatcher of *Lois & Clark*'s cast. "Lane [Smith] and Justin [Whalen] are both very talented."

Photo: Bob D'Amico

So what is *Lois & Clark*, really? According to Hatcher, "It is a fantasy, first and foremost. I think it's a fairy tale story about this relationship between Lois and Clark."

the *Superman* comics mythos, but was essentially forced out of her executive producer's chair by the network. It's a nettlesome topic for Hatcher, as it was LeVine who hired Hatcher and breathed life into the early days of *Lois & Clark* that Hatcher so fondly remembers. "It's hard to look back because we've come a long way since Deborah left. I was incredibly disappointed. I loved her and I loved her original vision. I was disappointed before she left and I think it was one of the reasons she did leave. I don't think she was happy with the direction the network was pushing the show in at the time. I wasn't particularly happy with it either, because it wasn't what I signed on to do," Hatcher acknowledges. "But, she had a contract she could get out of. I hope to work with her again and I hope she has success on other things.

"We had a weird transitional period, and in the press, [current executive producer] Bob Singer took a lot of the brunt for it. I have to say that, sitting where I sit, I've always appreciated his point-of-view and his effort. I think he does 'get it' and that he understands the vision Deborah originally created. Bob has had his priorities straight on where he thought the show should go. I think the disagreements or the directional changes were motivated by the network and never by anybody in particular who works on the show on a day-in, day-out basis. That's why, in the second season's beginning, you saw us headed in a direction that was much more action-oriented. We really lost some of the wit and sophistication in the relationship part of the show. It took us getting some lousy ratings for the first five or six shows before Bob was able to convince them to let us take the show back to being about the *relationship* between Lois and Clark.

"The audience started to respond to the show again. Once the ratings followed, then I think the network began to give us a little more freedom. Now we have two new producers, Eugenie Ross-Leming and Brad Buckner, who are really incredible and tremendous writers. They bring their best to the overall tone of the action, romance and sophistication. The episodes that are airing this year are really the best that we've had to offer."

"Believe it or not," Hatcher notes, "we *are* considered a drama."

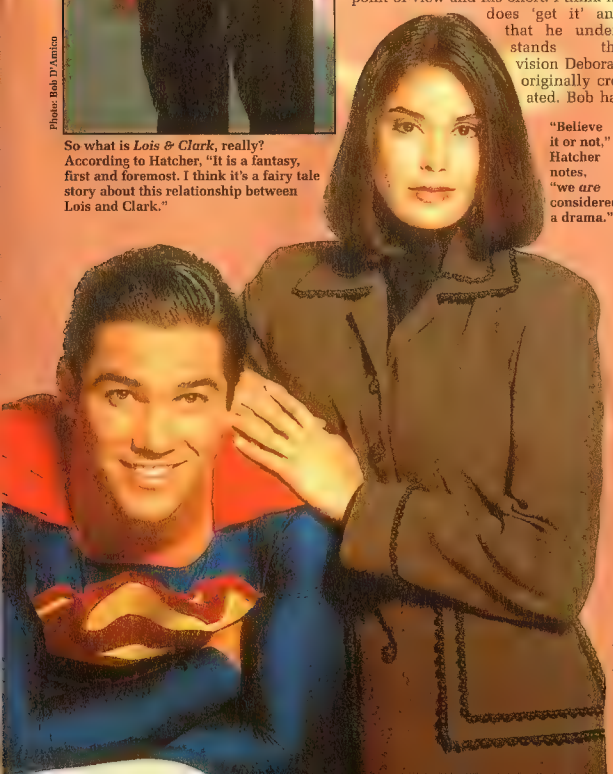


Photo: Timothy White

As she has noted, Hatcher is comfortable with her co-stars, with the show's balance of elements and with the series' guiding forces. So, it's no surprise, then, that the actress is just as comfortable with the special FX involved in making her fly along with Superman, escape from handcuffs after the Man of Steel has used his powers to snap them into pieces, and so on. "Nothing seems difficult to me anymore," says Hatcher. "It's the emotional scenes that are really challenging. I love that, so I never really look at challenging scenes as difficult. Probably the most difficult thing is getting drowned in cold cement take after take, for three hours, when it's 2 a.m. That's not fun and it won't ever be fun. Believe me."

Hatcher also says that she's comfortable with the fame that has come her way as a result of *Lois & Clark*. She jokes that fewer people recognize her on the street these days thanks to her new, shorter hairstyle. "I'm in a bit of a free zone because of my hair," she says, laughing. "Actually, we have really great fans and I've heard wonderful stories from kids and adults who love the show and love the work we're doing. It makes me feel really good that we're able to give something to the public that gives them an hour of enjoyment once a week."

As for being the queen of cyberspace, a title earned when thousands upon thousands of people downloaded assorted photos of her, Hatcher good-naturedly accepts her crown. "That's so

(continued on page 62)

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Animated Steel

The men behind the Dark Knight file the flight plan for Superman.

By PAT JANKIEWICZ

"That '40s kind of style would dictate the entire series to me, even when using the more science-fictiony characters like Brainiac. It really would be neat to do Brainiac as a '40s [illegible] from Hell."

And what would Superman be without the loy[illegible] gang, [illegible] the *Daily* [illegible]. Oh yeah, they [illegible]mately be there," h[illegible]ics. "Jimmy Olsen [illegible] White, everybod[illegible] be very much a '40s ki[illegible] Olsen, rather than th[illegible] Jimmy Olsen. I like *Lois* [illegible] I watch it every week, b[illegible] do it that way. I want to [illegible] different. I like Jimmy [illegible] young, 15-year-old kid [illegible] makes him a fun charact[illegible]

Batman writer/produc[illegible] is also on hand to help [illegible] Man of Tomorrow. "We'[illegible] main characters like Jim[illegible] Perry," Dini agrees. "[illegible]be exp[illegible] some Smallville people [illegible] also using Maggie S[illegible] Metropolis Special Crimes [illegible] the Terrible Trio [all cops from comics]. The SCU is interes[illegible] should see a lot of them [illegible] creating some all-new [illegible] characters."

As for u[illegible] like Doomsday, Timm[illegible] emphatic "No! On *Batman*, [illegible] did Bane under duress, but we [illegible] version of [illegible] Bane."

Photo: Pat Jankiewicz

Dini's list of villains includes Bizarro, Darkseid and Mr. Mxyztplk. "I like Mxyztplk and really want to do a story with him. I want to take him over and do interesting stuff with him like we did with the Joker," he professes. "How do you make him interesting, not all-powerful and annoying? I'm not sure how much we'll see of these guys, because the show's real focus is on Superman.

"We want to give attention to *everything* in the Superman mythos that we like and the fans expect, but the real challenge is Superman himself. We don't want to destroy him, we want to make him as interesting as possible. And for that matter, Clark Kent, too, because when you look at some of the Fleischer cartoons and the live-action black-and-white show, you see he was a pretty interesting character.

Bruce Timm, producer/designer/director on the animated *Batman*, has definite ideas for the look of the new series: "the early Superman, with his Jerry Siegel/Joe Shuster look."

"On TV, you couldn't do that much with Superman, because so much of his action revolved around stock flying shots and special FX they had trouble pulling off, so they really had to work to give Clark Kent a big portion of the action.

"In animation, we can do *anything*, but the more I see of the George Reeves show and read the early comics, the more I realize maybe there are things to do with Clark and Lois that no one has thought of before. We're starting very early in Clark and Lois' relationship. In fact, in the first episode, Superman comes to Metropolis and meets Lois."

Dini and Timm have specific plans for the Man of Steel. "I would like to do stories that show Superman being Superman," Dini says, "the apocryphal hero in everybody's minds. I want to do interesting stories with him and some good villains, stories that'll tell you a little more about him than you remember seeing.

"I want to keep many familiar elements intact, because you're dealing with a hero of mythic proportions, probably more so than any character that has appeared in the last 200 years. Superman sums up what many people think of America. I would like to do really classy superhero stories."

As for the voices of the Man of Steel and friends, "We would like name actors, *if* we can get them. We don't have any of the actors cast yet, but we do have a wish list."

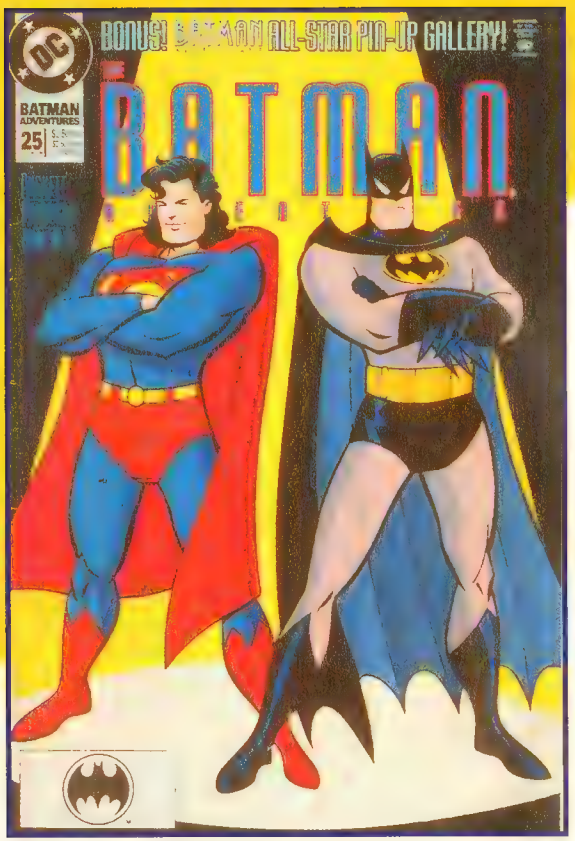
Dini says the group has no intention of doing another *Super Friends*. "We sure ain't gonna have him hanging out with two kids and a dog," he laughs. "I think of Superman as a loner hero. He's somebody that everybody likes, identifies with and would like to be, but other than the occasional team-up with another character, I don't see him taking part in a group or Justice League.

"I think we *will* do several 'World's Finest' stories with Batman, because he's the most likely one to cross over. Batman works because he's a good contrast for Superman; the darkness and the light of those characters is interesting. We might use other characters like the Flash.

"Again, the thing that makes it *Super Friends* is just sticking another hero in there for the sake of their being there. That's why we did it so rarely on *Batman*. It's not important to me to wedge every DC hero in there with

Superman & Related Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1995 DC Comics

The Metropolis Special Crimes Unit will be featured in the show according to Dini. "The SCU is interesting, so we should see a lot of them." Art: Abell/Guice



Batman: The Animated Series **writing veteran Dini hopes to bring the Dark Knight back for some guest appearances with Superman.**

him. I really want to focus on the classic Superman elements."

As for those inevitable comparisons to the Fleischer adventures, Dini feels, "That's inescapable; there will be some Fleischer influence in it. Look how much there was in *Batman*. The Fleischer *Supermans* are really good models as to how to make a really great cartoon. There's very little set-up and then you put Superman in a lot of action.

"You put him in a situation where he's *not* the all-powerful, godlike superhero. He can beat up a robot but he *really beats it up*! He doesn't freeze it with his super-breath and shatter it."

As for *Superman*, "It won't be *Batman* and it won't be Fleischer, although there will be elements of both," the writer states. "We won't have a dark look like *Batman*. Metropolis, as we see it, is very futuristic. It's like the 1939 World's Fair—our vision of Metropolis is New York as a very beautiful place. We're going to do an initial 13 episodes for Saturday morning, followed by 65 for daily strip.

"We're still in the process of figuring out what we're gonna do, but in the initial designs, *Superman* has a pretty classic look. We're still evolving the show; we have a presentation we're happy with, but we still have a ways to go. We're writing it at the same time.

"Just to re-acquaint myself with Superman stories, I went to a convention and bought a ton of old comics," Dini explains. "I was reading through them going, 'Ugh! Crap! Ugh, more crap!' In some of these stories, the setups are pretty good, but Superman's way of getting out of them? The villain says, 'I've destroyed everyone on Earth!' and Superman says, 'Well, you haven't destroyed me! By the way, right when I was throwing a punch at you, I stopped time and rescued everybody!' "

As for his take on Superman's personality, "I don't know yet; I don't really want to have Superman going through a lot of angst—'Boo Hoo! My planet blew up! Now I must deal with it by putting on a cape and flying around!'

"Everybody knows his planet blew up, that he's a stranger on Earth. It'll take some work to figure out what the most distinctive thing is about Superman. We'll probably discover it as we go along.

"We all know that we can do 'Superman vs. the giant robots' and make it interesting, but after we've done the first 10 or 12 'real action' shows, we'll gradually discover how to layer the character and those around him to make it just as interesting, if not more so, than *Batman*."

One wonders if fans will see Superman's beloved pet, Krypto the Super Dog. "I love Krypto. The first model kit I ever got when I was a kid was the Superboy model kit," Dini grins. "I spent about a week with these gummy, stained fingers putting Superboy and Krypto together.

"Part of me loved the idea that Superman had a dog. I bought every comic book that had Krypto on the cover just 'cause he was neat. I like Krypto, but I don't think he's going to show up in the series. The way it's shaping up now, Superman is pretty much the *only* super-being. Early on, I did come up with a pretty good Krypto story. I had a talk with Bruce where I said, 'I want to do a Krypto story,' and he said, 'NO!!!'

"I pitched him the story and he said, 'It's pretty good, but NO KRYPTO!!' When he made up his rules on what we will and won't put in *Superman*, Krypto was at the top of the 'No' list," Dini chuckles. "I said, 'Fine, we don't have to deal with him, there are plenty of good stories without him.'

"Krypto is only really good for one story anyway. He's one of those things I loved seeing in the comic as a kid, but if we did it on the show, we would kick open the door for Super-Horse, Super-Monkey and Super-Wombat. There was even a Super-Mouse in one story."

As for the future, the team has but one goal. "We want to make everyone really excited about seeing *Superman*," Paul Dini declares.

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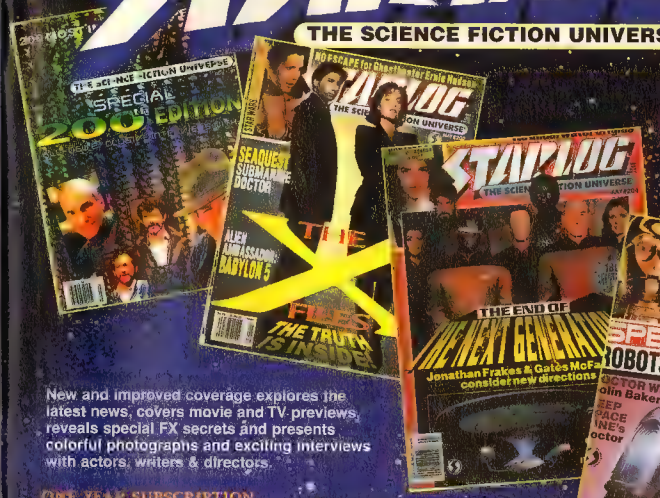
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SAILOR MOON

The popular Japanese animated adventure gets adapted for American viewers.

By BOB MILLER

Girl superheroes struggle to save Earth from demonic monsters in *Sailor Moon*, the newest Japanese animated series to hit U.S. airwaves.

Japanese cartoons have more emotion and more sensitivity in their storytelling [than American ones]. They rely on subtlety, different kinds of artwork and camerawork," so stated Andy Heyward, president of DIC Entertainment, as *USA Today* reported on January 30, 1995. With this in mind, DIC is currently syndicating the first 65 episodes of the popular Japanese series *Sailor Moon*.

"Due to limited shelf space and the availability of so many products, it's no surprise that retailers are looking for properties that offer the most potential success," says Joy Tashjian, president, worldwide merchandising and sales for DIC. "Eliminating risk for the retailers has become the name of the game. And the biggest movement in solving this dilemma is the resurgence of international imports, specifically Japanese properties," she wrote in *The Licensing Book*, February 1995.

Tashjian credits Saban's live-action *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* and *Superhuman Samurai Syber-Squad* for sparking renewed interest in Japanese action toys "because they offered a fresh alternative to the existing properties."

According to Japanese animation authority Fred Patten, "*Sailor Moon* is essentially what they call a 'Monster of the Week' show, only this one centers around a team of heroes who are all female. It's an all-girls school club that happens to be made up of superheroes who save Earth from demonic monsters."

Judicious re-editing will change some elements of *Sailor Moon* to make it more acceptable to American audiences, but the spirit of the show will remain.

All Sailor Moon Art Copyright 1995 DIC Entertainment

Design & Layout [illegible]

Bishogo Senshi Sailor Moon (*Lovely Soldier Sailor Moon*) premiered in Japan on Saturday, March 7, 1992. Such was the series' popularity that it actually saved its studio, Toei Animation, from going bankrupt with three days to spare.

"The heroine's name is 'Bunny' or 'Usagi,' the Japanese word for 'rabbit,' so-named because she has two long blonde pigtails," Patten explains. "In the first episode, she chases off some juvenile delinquents who were tormenting a cat. It turns out that the cat, Luna, is an agent from the Kingdom of the Moon looking for the Moon Queen, Princess Serene, who has been lost these last several thousand years.

"Because of Usagi's good heart, in saving her, Luna decides Usagi should be gifted with the magic amulet which will turn her into Sailor Moon, who will fight to protect the Earth from the demons, while they both look for Princess Serene.

"The energy demons are sort of like energy vampires from an alternate dimension. They suck the energy out of Earth people to stay alive.

"In every episode, there is a new attack upon the people of your average city, which happens to be Tokyo. Of course, viewers are supposed to assume that it's their own city," Patten says. "Usagi and Luna have to fight off monsters and this distracts them from looking for the missing princess. The formula was, the monsters would get more and more powerful for about five or six episodes. Usagi would finally get to the point where they were just about to defeat her, then she would need help. This would be another girl, who would then be invited to join the club and become Sailor. So, you have Sailor Mercury, Sailor Mars, Sailor Jupiter, and so on.

"In fact, their superhero costumes are all variations on the Japanese official school uniform for girls, which look like sailor suits. This would be easily understood by any Japanese child. American schoolkids apparently are not supposed to wonder why everybody in school is wearing a uniform. You're also not supposed to realize that one of these high school students—who is moonlighting as a superhero in her spare time—is a Shinto priestess.

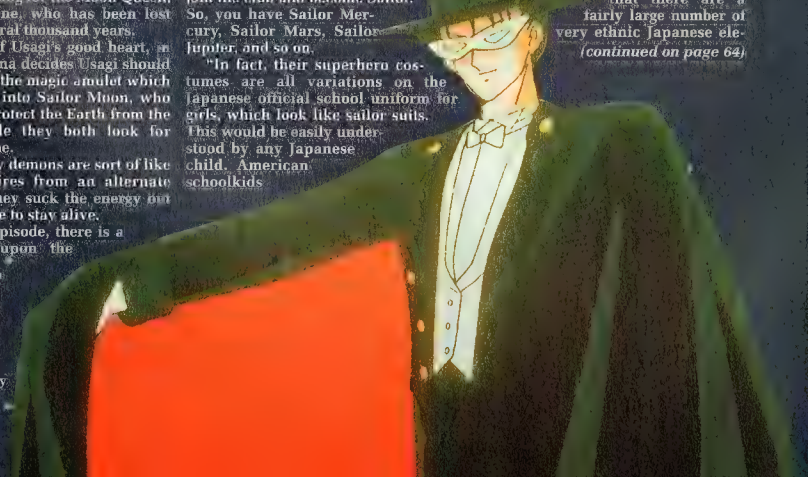
"Anyway, after about 35 episodes everybody realizes the reason they couldn't find Princess Serene was because she died a long time ago and had been reincarnated as Usagi herself."

Typically in Japanese action-adventure shows, much of the cast dies in the final episode, which would've been episode #46, if the series hadn't been so popular. In February 1993, the characters were reborn, and the title changed to *Lovely Soldier Sailor Moon R*, running from episode #47 to #89. The show changed to *Sailor Moon S* in March 1994, which ran to episode #131 on March 25, 1995. On April 8, a one-hour special, *Sailor Moon SS*, began a new era for the series. Patten notes that there have been at least two movies, one of which was a theatrical feature and the other a TV special. Of all these episodes, DIC is syndicating only 65 this fall. Patten believes that episode 65 itself may be in the middle of the story arcs.

"It's like any long-running soap opera," he says. "It develops great storylines which its devotees know by heart, which to strangers, it would take about four or five hours to explain who the characters are, their interpersonal relationships and what's happening.

"I do know that there are a fairly large number of very ethnic Japanese ele-

(continued on page 64)



When the search for the mythical Princess Serene fails, it is discovered that Usagi, the leader of the group, is actually the Princess reincarnated.

CLASH OF THE TITANS

The battles of the century begin—with the destinies of two universes at stake.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

It's the superhero battle of the century—and at last, it will be resolved! For decades, fans of the Big Two publishers have argued over whose heroes are more powerful. Could Captain America take the Batman? Who is stronger, Aquaman or the Sub-Mariner? Can the Hulk beat Superman? At last, the hottest super-matchups of the last 35 years will be decided—and all by the readers!

A special four-part limited series, *DC Versus Marvel* (from DC Comics) and *Marvel Versus DC* (from Marvel Comics) sees the major heroes from each company square off in the super-slugfest to end all super-slugfests.

Dan (*Superman*) Jurgens and Claudio (*Fantastic Four Unlimited*) Castellini share the pencilling chores on all four issues. Issues #1 and #3 are being written by Ron (*Green Lantern/Silver Surfer*) Marz, while Peter (*Incredible Hulk, Aquaman*) David is scripting issues #2 and #4.

According to Marz, the actual storyline involves two new cosmically powered villains that threaten both universes. "The mechanism we created that gets all of this rolling is two cosmic characters," says Marz. "One is the overall embodiment of the DC Universe, the other is the overall embodiment of the Marvel Universe. The backstory is that these two beings are, for lack of a better word, brothers, and they were separated at birth. They were actually supposed to be one *complete* being, but after billions of eons, they have separated and grown further and further apart. They each rule the roost in their respective universe. Now, because of some cosmic-level events that have taken place in the Marvel/DC continuity, they've noticed each other, and they're starting to come together again. This leads to a merger of the Marvel and DC Universes, and also leads into these battles that involve the champions of each universe."

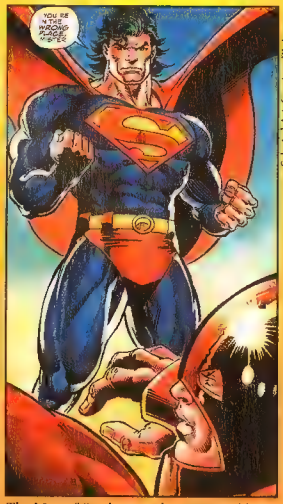
All the heroes face a strong incentive to win their battles. "The losing universe gets *eradicated*. Those are the ground rules of the battles. 'Hey, you might not want to fight Captain America, Batman, but you have to preserve everything that you hold dear. You have to take on another champion from another universe.' And when the battles are tallied, the universe that ends up on the short end is to be *destroyed*!"

The six preliminary bouts in the first issues see Flash vs. Quicksilver, Thor vs. the original Captain Marvel, Robin vs. Jubilee, Sub-Mariner vs. Aquaman, Green Lantern vs. Silver Surfer and Elektra vs. Catwoman. The main events—which will be decided by a poll of readers at comics shops, on-line and by e-mail—are Captain America vs. Batman, Hulk vs. Superman, Superboy vs. Spider-Man, Wolverine vs. Lobo, and Wonder Woman vs. Storm.

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

"We were trying to apply our own fanboy sensibilities," says *Marvel Versus DC* writer Peter David, who helped decide which heroes would face off in the battle of the century.

Marz's involvement began when he received a phone call from DC editor Mike Carlin and Marvel editor Mark Gruenwald asking whether he wanted to be a part of the historic project. "Obviously, you don't need a brain specialist to figure out that you say yes when these kind of offers come," says Marz. "It's the coolest thing to come down the pike in quite some time—maybe ever!"



Selected Art Courtesy DC Comics

The Man of Steel meets the unstoppable Juggernaut in the first issue of the miniseries that finally brings the Marvel and DC Universes into full contact.

It all started with a phone call for Peter David, as well. "Mark Gruenwald and Mike Carlin called me up and asked if I would be interested in getting involved in something like this," explains David. "They told me what the setup was; I looked over my schedule and decided there was no way in hell I could possibly manage it, and then said I would do it anyway!"

The lineups for the battles were finalized during discussions among the editors and writers. "We all did it together," David explains. "It was a case of combining sensibilities—our own, in terms of what we wanted to see, and our feelings as to what the fans want to see. This was supposed to be the ultimate fanboy project. We were trying to apply our own fanboy sensibilities so that we could say to ourselves, 'Gotta do Superman and the Hulk! Gotta do Batman and Captain America!' Some of the lineups were slightly problematic—Superboy and Spider-Man we kind of backed into. There was a kind of balance. Everyone wanted to see Wolverine and Lobo go at it. Pretty much everything you've seen on a computer board under the designation of 'Who wins?' when they try to figure out who could take on who at their respective companies is in there."

"The main events were really obvious," adds Marz. "We moved some components around because we thought they would be better battles, but I think the list we came up with makes a lot of sense. These are the ones that people *want* to see!"

Some of the logistics had been worked out before the writers were involved. "They had some idea," says Marz, "but there wasn't a finalized list, by any means. And really, there wasn't a great deal of the story figured out when we started on this pro-

'Superman, Batman & Associated Characters' Trademark & Copyright 1995 DC Comics, Inc. Spider-Man, Captain America & Associated Characters, Trademark & Copyright 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

Selected Art: Dan Jurgens/Claudio Castellini

As if Spider-Man didn't have enough trouble with his own villains, now he must fight the Joker too.

ject. There was just this general thought of a 'clash of the titans' type of battle, the framework around which we would have to build."

The preliminary action starts in the second issue, while the main events are scheduled for issue #3, once readers have had their say. "The first issue has a lot of setups, and many first meetings between characters and universes starting to come together," Marz explains. "There's a lot of story there, and visuals that readers have been asking about for years! The first issue ends with a revelation of what's happening. Issue #2 builds from there, and reveals even more of the backstory. That issue also features three of the preliminary contests. Issue #3 is the big knockdown, dragout fight—we have the other three preliminary bouts, and the five main battles decided in the third issue."

Unlike many super-battles from decades past, there will be *decisive* winners in all of the bouts, as determined by the readers. The six preliminaries, however, are being pre-determined by the creators. "Peter and I and the editors decided the outcome of the preliminary battles," reveals Marz. "We had a meeting in Mark Gruenwald's apartment in Manhattan. We sat down and made a list of who we wanted to see taking on whom."

"We worked out who the winners and losers were going to be—it was very much a group thing," continues David. "It wasn't like Mark and Mike said, 'OK, Peter, you're doing the preliminaries, so these will be the winners and these will be the losers, and if you don't like it, too bad.' We sat there and hashed it out."

The results were equitable for the preliminaries. "There is an even split along company lines," says David. "If nothing else, if the reader voting is wildly lopsided, no one company comes away completely humiliated!"

David adds that he isn't worried about having readers' polls determine the main events, because those all occur in issue #3—which is scripted by Marz. "It's a cakewalk for me!" David laughs. "The reader voting won't have a whole hell of a lot of effect on what I'm doing in issue #4. I would like to think, presuming that it can be done time-wise and logistically, that the dialogue would be able to reflect the outcomes of the battles in issue #3. I want to be able to have the right person saying to the right person, 'Next time, it's going to be a different story!' I want to be sure that Wolverine says to Lobo, 'You got off lucky this time!' or vice versa."

A telephone poll several years ago determined the life-or-death fate of the Jason Todd Robin, with alternate pages prepared for either eventuality. Marz explains that they have made similar plans to accommodate the voting—and the tight deadlines at the printer—for each of the five major battles.

"The outcomes are in the hands of *anybody* who votes, and since I did issue #3, it's my headache, and the headaches of the respective artists. I don't want to give away how it all plays out, but I can say that the voters' whims *will* be reflected in these battles. If Superman beats the Hulk in the voting, then Superman will win the battle in the book!"

Marz isn't worried that fans of either company will try to stuff the ballot box. "We're ready for whatever they give us!" he laughs. "Obviously, we sat around and collectively thought to ourselves, 'Well, this guy is probably going to beat this guy,' but nothing is a safe bet. We're ready for whatever they give us, and we will, in turn, give the readers whatever they have requested."

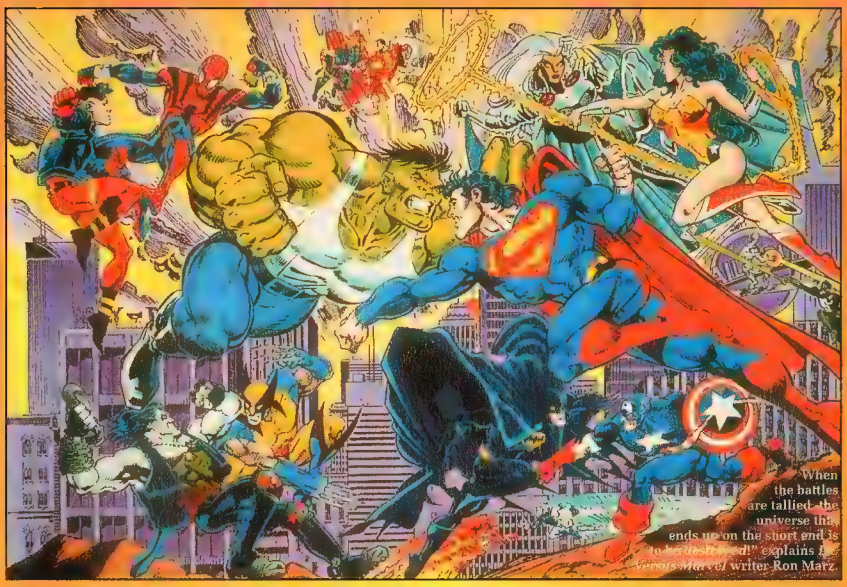
As a result of the unprecedented cooperation between the two companies, there was virtually nothing the writers were prohibited from doing in this story. "We've been able to do pretty much whatever we wanted, up to and including having Rick Jones and Snapper Carr work side-by-side as carnival barkers!" David laughs.

This battle royal even involves some major comics villains. "Interestingly enough, the villains seem to get along better with each other than the heroes do!" David says. "For example, we have the two Scarecrows—I would have loved to work in the Scarecrow of Romney Marsh, as well, but he just did not fit. Darkseid and Thanos go up against each other. Killer Croc and the Abomination hit it off. And, it all starts off with Spider-Man going up against the Joker! My personal favorite matchup, probably because I wrote it, was Captain America vs. Bane. We have a repeat of the famous moment where Bane is lifting Batman over his head, about to break him in half, but we have that same moment with Captain America."

Although the results of all of the bouts are decisive in this limited series, that's no guarantee a future rematch will always end with the same victor. "What I tried to take

DC's Captain Marvel meets the son of Marvel Comics' Captain Marvel on one of the trading cards which tie-in with the mini-series.

into account is that these people are not battling each other in a void," notes David. "It's not like they're out on an empty plain. Wars and battles are very much decided by the terrain, the environment. Is it raining? Is it dry? Is the ground slick? Is there snow, ice, dirt? Are there bystanders? Is there no one around? Are there things that can be used to help win the battle? The fights go a certain way because the environment plays a part, as would happen in any war. To my mind, that's more realistic. It's not like we take the two of



When the battles are tallied, the universe that ends up on the short end is "to be determined," explains *DC Versus Marvel* writer Ron Marz.

them and put them in a ring and let them slug it out.

"So, the argument can always be made that if it were a different set of circumstances, a different time, a different environment, then the outcome might be different. Many of these characters probably could pound the crap out of each other for a sustained period of time—pages and pages and pages, if not issues and issues—without any certain victor. We don't have that option," David states. "But, it's going to seem cheap and ridiculous if the various characters get soundly trounced in a couple of pages. It's going to seem very artificial. So, I hit on the idea that the victor of each battle is determined along wrestling lines—the equivalent of being the first one to pin your opponent. That gives you a lot of latitude, and levels the playing field a little bit.

"On the one hand, you have the—pardon the expression—x factor of the environment, but on the other hand, you've leveled the playing field. Wolverine and Lobo might be able to slug it out over a lengthy period of time, but all you need, for example, is for Wolverine to get lucky 30 seconds into the fight, and suddenly it's over! So, instead of just people pounding the crap out of each other, it's very much a battle of wits. You're not just out to overwhelm your opponent, you're out to immobilize him—that's *all* you have to do. But, that can be tricky."

Marvel and DC's first crossovers in *Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man* and *Batman vs. the Incredible Hulk* nearly 20 years ago are not considered to be a part of the current continuity, unlike the recent *Batman/Spider-Man* and *Green Lantern/Silver Surfer* matchups. "That was a sticky question that we had to wrestle with for a while," says Marz. "We selected the most recent crossovers and decided we could make reference to them. The most important prior crossover is *Green Lantern/Silver Surfer*, because it takes the separate Marvel and DC Universes and recognizes them."

According to David, the earliest inter-company crossovers aren't even relevant to the characters as they exist today. "For want of a better concept, those took place on an alternate Earth. I think the statute of limitations has run out on those. Besides, if you remember the very first issue of *Superman vs. Spider-Man*, that sequence was definitely shown to be in an alternate world. Whereas, this story takes place in what is generally considered to be the *real* Marvel Universe and the *real* DC Universe, if fictional universes can be described as 'real.' "

The mainstream press, including *USA Today*, UPI, AP and Reuters, all picked up the announcement of the limited series, but David is reluctant to say whether the inter-company crossover will be enough to help jump-start interest in the comics industry. "You can jump-start the industry, but you have to make sure that there are people there who are going to then keep the engine running," the writer maintains. "Look at the 'Death of Superman.' That was something that was geared to jump start the industry. It got more publicity than anyone could possibly imagine, and then people came into the stores and found that it was marked up to $20, $30, $80. I think there is the potential to bring people into the stores looking for this thing. But, we have to count on the retailers being smart and savvy enough to make it available to them, rather than jack the prices up. Let's face it, just judging by the sales trends, the chances are that there will be fewer copies of this available than there were of the 'Death of Superman.' Are they then going to jack the price up on the basis of availability? You saw what many of them raised the prices up to on a book in which there were millions and millions of copies around. If this gets that kind of media attention and there are fewer copies around, are they going to take this as an opportunity to get people in stores and keep them there, or are they going to use it to profiteer? Who knows?"

The events of *DC Versus Marvel/Marvel Versus DC* are indeed part of the continuity of the respective characters,

"The most enjoyable aspect of it all was sitting around with a couple of other guys who were fans like me, saying, 'How about if so-and-so fought so-and-so,' " says David.

and a future issue of *Spider-Man* could contain a reference to his battle with Superboy

"This mini-series itself is self-contained," says Marz. "You buy the four issues of the mini series, and you get the whole story —you don't have to buy any of the monthly books for the story's continuation. But, this project is certainly *within* continuity. It's considered to be real continuity, for whatever that term means. We want to treat this thing like it really happened, with long-lasting ramifications. We wanted the readers to feel like this is the real deal."

Not only is the crossover a part of the permanent continuity of each of the characters involved, but there may be some long-lasting effects to the DC and Marvel Universes. "I don't know if you can necessarily do any permanent damage to any of the characters, but you can have things happen to the universe in which they live, or the characters who populate that universe can have a permanent change," observes David.

Despite the vagaries of the comics marketplace, *DC Versus Marvel/Marvel Versus DC* may be that rare project that appeals to the eight-year-old comics fan in all of us. "The most enjoyable aspect of it all was sitting down with a couple of other guys who were fans like me, saying, 'How about if so-and-so fought so-and-so?' " says David. "Fifteen years ago, this is the sort of conversation that I would have been having with other fans, and it would have been idle speculation. Here, I was having the same kind of conversation with the same kind of mentality, but it was going to stick! 'Wouldn't it be cool

Spider-Man has got himself a new costume, but will he get pounded by Superboy before he gets a chance to break it in?

if Superman fought the Hulk? OK, let's put that in issue #3, and that will be one of the phone-in ones!' "

"I was getting a real kick out of doing the Aquaman/Sub-Mariner slugout, and the Quicksilver/Flash, because those were matchups that I was doing as a kid," continues David. "I would sit there with my drawing pad—and I draw fairly badly—and produce these two characters going at each other. The only one from my youth that I didn't get a chance to do was Green Arrow/Hawkeye, which would, of course, conclude with the two of them shooting arrows at each other that keep colliding. I consider myself a perfectly valid comic book fan, and so I think it is certainly a great project for fans to read and for me to write!"

DC Versus Marvel/Marvel Versus DC may be just an excuse for some superheroic battles, but Peter David and Ron Marz are going the extra distance to give readers their money's worth with the story beyond the brawls.

"I'm going to try to be as ingenious as I possibly can in the way that the fights are structured," David says. "Also, we're hoping that the structure of the story itself—the concept of a battle for survival, the notion that these two universes are indeed connected in a way that had not been previously revealed—will contain enough elements to really knock people's socks off, and make them feel there is something major *and* epic going on here."

LEARNING TO CRAWL

Turning back the clock, writer Kurt Busiek fills in the Untold Tales of Spider-Man.

By PAT JANKIEWICZ

Ah yes, the high school years. Who can forget the carefree days of first dates, teachers you hate and school dances? Peter Parker's teenage years were more exciting than most: caring for his chronically ailing Aunt, working for a great metropolitan newspaper and slugging it out after school with Dr. Octopus, the Chameleon and the Green Goblin.

Writer Kurt Busiek—who chronicled the Golden Ages of superheroes in *Marvels*—has decided to take a trip down memory lane and send Spidey back to school for the series *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*. Readers will be re-introduced to the young, inexperienced Spidey recently seen only in *Marvel Tales* reprints. "I think the appeal is that the young Spider-Man is the *purest* Spider-Man," Busiek explains. "The core concept of Spider-Man is a young guy who doesn't really know how to handle life yet, but he's taking his best crack at it.

"Thanks to the bite of a radioactive spider and the talent of the writer, life for him is more challenging than it was for you and me at the same age. He has learned that 'with great power comes great responsibility,' so he tackles things with as much honesty as he can.

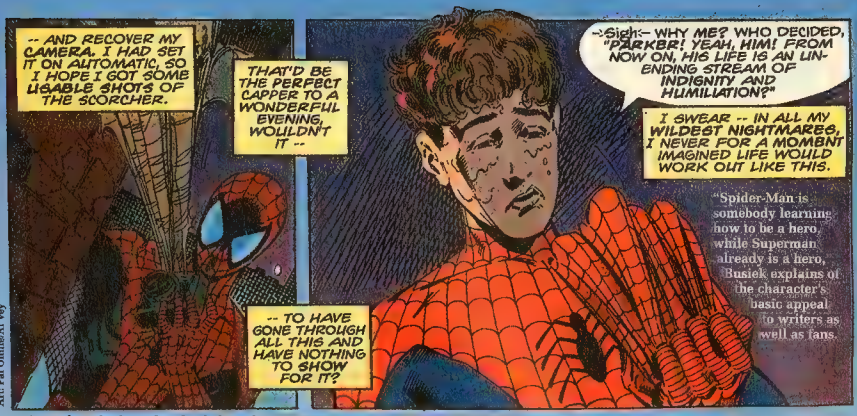
"It's an error when people boil Spider-Man down to his origin where he made a mistake, learned from it and is now a hero, because Spidey *always* makes mistakes. Uncle Ben's death was just the first and biggest one. Spider-Man is somebody learning how to be a hero, while Superman already *is* a hero. That's why Spider-Man has more appeal for readers and writers."

Some worry that monkeying with Spider-Man's high school years will wreak havoc on the saga's continuity. "I don't think we're going to screw up continuity or cause a great deal of trouble, simply because I *am* worried about it," the writer explains. "I research everything. If I bring in Captain America, for instance, I'm gonna check the first time Captain America met Spider-Man in *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #1. In it, Cap told Mr. Fantastic, 'I have never met Spider-Man.' So if I have Spider-Man meet Captain America before that, it would be a mistake.

"On the other hand, there's no indi-

***Untold Tales of Spider-Man* writer Kurt Busiek records the stories that Stan Lee and Steve Ditko missed.**

Spider-Man & Related Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. Art: Pat Olliffe/Al Vey Design & Layout: Jim McLarnon


-- AND RECOVER MY CAMERA. I HAD SET IT ON AUTOMATIC, SO I HOPE I GOT SOME USABLE SHOTS OF THE SCORCHER.
THAT'D BE THE PERFECT CAPPER TO A WONDERFUL EVENING, WOULDN'T IT --
-- TO HAVE GONE THROUGH ALL THIS AND HAVE NOTHING TO SHOW FOR IT?
-Sigh:- WHY ME? WHO DECIDED, "PARKER! YEAH, HIM! FROM NOW ON, HIS LIFE IS AN UN-ENDING STREAM OF INDIGNITY AND HUMILIATION?"
I SWEAR -- IN ALL MY WILDEST NIGHTMARES, I NEVER FOR A MOMBNT IMAGINED LIFE WOULD WORK OUT LIKE THIS.

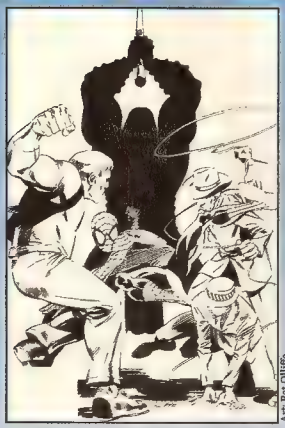
"Spider-Man is somebody learning how to be a hero, while Superman already is a hero," Busiek explains of the character's basic appeal to writers as well as fans.

Art: Pat Olliffe/Al Vey

cation that before he had his first adventure with Hawkeye in *Spider-Man Annual* #3, they hadn't met before. At the annual's beginning, Hawkeye talks about Spider-Man as 'his kind of guy.' I figure that makes it easy to do a story where Spider-Man gives Hawkeye the idea he's 'his kind of guy.' Aside from the fact that it's a pleasure to read those classic issues, it's also worth doing to make sure we're getting it right."

The Boston-born Busiek "got interested in comics much later than most people do. I was a teenager when I started picking up comics regularly. I talked a schoolmate, Scott McCloud, into being interested in comics, and we did our own comics together. By the time I was done with high school, I knew I wanted to be a comic-book writer. I went off to Syracuse University and both Scott and I ended up working in the comics industry right after we got out of school."

Before his success, Busiek had to struggle. "When I was working in comics and not making enough money, I worked at Burger King as a fry cook while looking for other work," he chuckles. "Luckily, I found the other work! I still cook a very good hamburger, though."



Art: Pat Olliffe

Separately they were Ox, Fancy Dan and Montana, but together they were the Enforcers. Busiek brings us a lost battle between Spider-Man and this terrible trio.

Currently, Busiek has two other *Spider-Man* projects: *Legacy of Evil*, a graphic novel chronicling the Green Goblins, and *Amazing Fantasy* #16, #17 and #18. In these and *Untold Tales*, he enjoys telling Spider-Man's lost adventures. "I love all the characters, but my favorites are Peter and J. Jonah Jameson. Jameson is one of the most fascinating characters in the Marvel Universe. Jonah is a good reporter, the *Daily Bugle* is a crusading newspaper that has been on the positive side of civil rights issues; he just has this one bug.

"Too many editors explained to me that Jonah doesn't like Spider-Man because he just doesn't like Spider-Man. The real reason has been spelled out very clearly. Spider-Man is such a hero, he makes Jonah feel small. Jonah cannot accept what it says about him if Spider-Man is as self-sacrificing as he is. I tried to play with that in Jonah's appearances in *Marvels*, hinting that even in the '40s, Jonah didn't care for the Human Torch. As Jonah puts it, 'He flies around making regular Joes like us look like pikers!' Jonah is a good man with a fatal flaw. He's a tragic hero.

"Also, I have a lot of fun with Norman Osborn, because he's such a sneaky son of a bitch. I think Spider-Man is the center of this great cast and that makes him enormously appealing to me as a character."

The book will also have no shortage of new friends and foes for Spidey. "I've got quite a few coming," the writer laughs. "We had a new villain in issue #1, the Scorcher, and another in #2, Batwing. In #3, we brought back the first of our classic villains, the Sandman.

PARKER!
-Lllp:- I WAS KINDA HOPING HE WOULDN'T SEE ME...
GOT ANY PHOTOS FOR ME TODAY, PARKER? ANY ACTION SHOTS OF A CERTAIN AERIAL HORROR? ANY CANDID SNAPS FOR FRONT-PAGE CONSUMPTION ?

Art: Pat Olliffe/Al Vey & Pam Eklund

Busiek's favorite characters are Peter Parker and J. Jonah Jameson. "Jameson is one of the most fascinating characters in the Marvel Universe."

Art: Pat Olliffe/Al Vey

"I'm not only going to need new villains, but new supporting characters. According to the *Amazing Spider-Man* comics, in his high school years, Peter knew Liz Allen and Flash Thompson. Well, he had to know somebody else—it was a city high school! There were many students at Midtown High and we're going to learn their names. We're going to see Peter interact with other people, as well as Flash and Liz. We'll expand his high school experiences and introduce villains so we can do some important stories. In the Sandman story, we learn something interesting about Spider-Man's relationship with the Sandman.

"With characters like Scorcher and Batwing, we can shake 'em up and do permanent things to them. You know Sandman isn't gonna die, but you don't know if Scorcher will mutate into something more horrible or turn out to be somebody you didn't expect him to be. With new characters, we have the freedom to make the book unpredictable, and with classic characters, we have the ability to re-visit classic situations and find out something new about them."

Busiek explains that *Untold Tales* also lets him work with a number of Spidey's dead friends and acquaintances. "I used Captain Stacy in the first issue," he grins. "Gwen was in there, too. Sharp-eyed readers might have seen her photo on George Stacy's desk. Gwen herself has a walk-on in issue #4, as does Norman Osborn and his son Harry, because Harry goes to school with Gwen. They attended New York's fictitious Standard High. Gwen won't meet Peter before we *know* she met Peter, but we'll be seeing plenty of Gwen when we get to the college years. Until then, we'll see Gwen here and there.

"We'll definitely see a story told entirely from Mary Jane Watson's point-of-view, *before* she meets Peter and Spider-Man. She knows Peter is Spider-Man; she saw him come out of the bedroom window the night of *Amazing Fantasy* #15, when Uncle Ben was murdered. We'll see a story where she witnesses a Spider-Man adventure and knows more about what's going on than anybody else.

"I want to do a story, but I haven't figured out how to tell it, from Gwen's point-of-view. I want it to be a Gwen and George Stacy story, so we can do lots of fun stuff with the characters.

Besides creating new villains for Spidey, Busiek is free to take a look back at some old favorites, including Sandman.

"The magic of the Marvel Universe changed sometime between 1972 and 1974. Gwen's death makes a terrific symbol for that," says Busiek, whose *Marvels* mini-series ended with Gwen Stacy's demise.

Art: Alex Ross

George Stacy is dead in the present day, but he's alive in my book, as are Dr. Octopus and Kraven the Hunter. I'm sure I'll be using them, in part because they can't be used in the regular book and that's one of the things that makes *Untold Tales* different."

In *Marvels*, Busiek and Alex Ross used Gwen Stacy's death as a metaphor for the death of the '60s and the loss of innocence in the Marvel Universe. "That wasn't calculated, it just happened that way," Busiek confides. "When we worked out the plot for *Marvels*, Alex wanted to paint stories involving a variety of characters. Since one of those was the original Human Torch and the other was Gwen Stacy, we decided to do it as a period piece.

"The last story we had to tell would be a Gwen Stacy story. That suggested using the story to create a resolution. Alex and I both feel the magic of the

DON'T WORRY, GENERAL -- I'LL GIVE YOUR TOY THE MOST GENTLE OF RIDES!
AFTER ALL, I WOULDN'T WANT ANYTHING TO HAPPEN TO IT --
BEFORE I SELL IT TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER!
HE'S GONE!
BUT YOU -- I'LL SEE YOU ROT IN JAIL UNTIL YOU'VE GOT LONG GRAY WHISKERS! YOU MUST'VE BEEN IN ON IT WITH HIM -- DISTRACTING US WHILE HE --
TO DISAPPOINT YOU, GENERAL -- BUT NOW THAT I'VE GOT A DECENT GRIP ON THIS NET --
Art: Art: Pat Olliffe/Al Milgrom

Marvel Universe changed sometime between 1972 and 1974. Gwen's death makes a terrific symbol for that. It had the symbolic resonance that we needed, so we ran with it."

Untold Tales readers can also expect to see the star of *Marvels*. *Daily Bugle* photographer Phil Sheldon appears in issue #4. "I don't think he'll say anything, but I asked the artist to put him in a scene. Phil is a working journalist in the Marvel Universe between WWII and shortly after Gwen's death. If there's a press conference, Phil might show up.

Art: Mike McKone/Mark McKenna Spartan, Trademark & Copyright 1995 Aegis Entertainment

***Spartan: Warrior Spirit* is among several Image projects penned by Busiek.**

"Phil is designed to be someone unimportant; he's just an ordinary guy, so he shouldn't meet Spider-Man or become friends with Peter Parker. We might see him if we do a story with Ben Urich or Fredrick Foswell. Those are guys Phil would know and have interaction with. Simply because Phil was in a story that people like, we *shouldn't* boost his role in the Marvel Universe. People like him because he was an ordinary guy."

To give *Untold Tales* an authentic flavor, does Busiek try to write it in Stan Lee's style? "For the dialogue, yes," he confides. "For Spider-Man's quips in battle and stuff like that, of course. That's the way Spider-Man talks. Jonah will act like Jonah, but I'm not trying to write captions like Stan did, and my sound effects don't have exclamation points at the end!

"I would love to try to do a Stan Lee/Steve Ditko issue of *Spider-Man*—the whole schmeer: double-sized art, nine panels per page, six word balloons per panel and lots of yakking," Busiek says wistfully. "We're trying to tell *Untold Tales* in a modern style; we want to be true to the characters. We're not trying to recapture the craft of the early '60s, we're trying to recapture the atmosphere."

Though *Untold Tales* follows Spidey's exploits in the Lee/Ditko era, the artists use more recent artists' conventions. "The Todd McFarlane webbing and the big eyes on the mask are the two things the editors decided they wanted to keep to make the book look modern," he relates. "There isn't a transition where Spider-Man created a new [McFarlane-style] web formula, so it's just a matter of artistic styles that the webbing is drawn to look that way and his eyes get bigger or smaller.

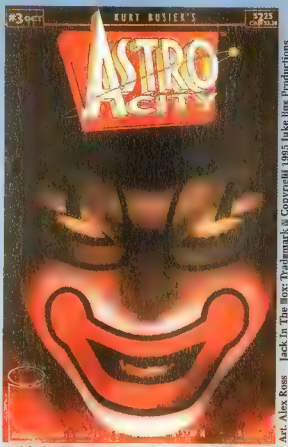
"Steve Ditko never drew those eyes the same size twice! The concession we made to the old Spider-Man is that the emblem on his chest is the old spider emblem [instead of the current scarab-style design]. We kept that, but Marvel wants the book to be as 'reader-friendly' as possible, so McFarlane's webs are part of that."

If you're up on your Marvel history, you'll recognize General Thaddeus "Thunderbolt" Ross, as well as the original Vulture, who appear in *Untold Tales* #5.

Busiek's recent series *Astro City* was "my attempt to show what it's like to live in the superhero genre. The first issue was narrated by a superhero, the rest were narrated by a reporter, a petty criminal, an innocent bystander, an alien spy and a kid from a rural area who comes to Astro City with dreams of being a kid sidekick. I worked with Alex Ross and Brent Anderson on it—Alex did the covers and major character design. As on *Marvels*, Alex is also a sounding board and helps figure stuff out.

"I like all the characters in it. I'm trying to avoid 'my take on Superman or my take on Batman.' Samaritan, for example, is a strong, noble hero with a cape who flies around and he even has blue hair. We're definitely in Superman territory, but we're digging down to the archetypes under these heroes. Samaritan has a white dove on his chest and a name out of the Bible.

"Also, I use the concept of a superhero family. I took the family with superpowers and drew on what I imagine is the experience of Bridget Fonda. Henry Fonda was a great actor, Jane



Art: Alex Ross Jack In The Box: Trademark & Copyright 1995 Juke Box Productions

Published by Image Comics, *Astro City* is Busiek's attempt "to show what it's like to live in a superhero genre."

Fonda, Henry's daughter, proved herself a terrific actress Bridget Fonda [Peter Fonda's daughter] comes along and everybody says, 'She's a Fonda, you can expect good acting.'

"What would it be like to be a superpowered young woman who's the granddaughter of an internationally famous hero and the daughter of a couple of other famous heroes, so it's just *expected* that you'll be another famous hero? The Bridget Fonda character is called Astra and the group is called The First Family."

Besides *Astro City*, Busiek is doing several projects for Image. "I'm writing the new *Shadowhawk* series with James Fry and Andrew Pepoy. The new Shadowhawk is a mystery. I'll tell you this much: He's *not* Paul Johnstone, the previous Shadowhawk, who is dead. It'll all be revealed in the book, but Johnstone did not come back to life. I'm also doing *The Regulators* for Jim Valentino. It's about a group of criminals and their adventures being criminals. They're not saving the world or acting like heroes to get a parole.

"I'm doing *Spartan: Warrior Spirit*, a mini-series for *Wildstorm* about Spartan, leader of the *Wildcats*. I'm doing a *Velocity: Thrill of the Chase* mini-series—she's a member of CyberForce. I'll also be doing *Youngblood: Year One*."

Most promising is "a project I'm doing for Erik Larsen with Neil Vokes. People asked me when I was gonna do 'Images,' a *Marvels* for the Image Universe. This is our answer to that and it's not what people expect. It's the adventures of a photographer taking news photos in the Image Universe and," the writer promises, "what happens to him will have to be seen to be believed. The Image Universe is a very different place than the Marvel Universe; it's much rougher and dangerous and that's all I'll say about that!"

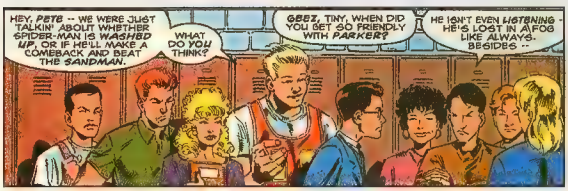
Would he ever sequelize *Marvels*? "Marvel is doing a sequel. I've also talked to them about doing a special that would show what happened to Phil in his last days," Busiek states. "It would also reveal what happened to Maggie, the little mutant girl from *Marvels* #2.

"After *Marvels*, I got a phone call," he smiles. "Somebody said, 'Hello, is this Kurt? How do you pronounce your last name?' 'It's Busiek.' 'Well, Kurt Busiek, this is Stan Lee and I just want to say you're a genius.' He raved about *Marvels* and wrote the introduction in the trade paperback. He was very excited to see straight treatment given to stories on which he worked. It was very gratifying to hear from Stan, John Romita and Roy Thomas."

Overall, Kurt Busiek feels there's one secret to writing great comics. "I think it's to do it with honesty. I talked to Jack Kirby a couple of times in my life and one piece of advice he gave me was, 'If the characters react the way you or your friends would, it doesn't matter how far-out the story gets, the audience will go along because they act the way they would in the same situation.' That's the key to *any* kind of fiction writing. You've got to make the reader feel like he's there. As for big surprises, like deaths, costume changes and new characters with teeth coming out of their teeth? None of that matters if you can't make the reader feel it. That is the baseline secret of writing comics."

Art: Art: Pat Olliffe/Al Milgrom/John Romita

Untold Tales **penciller Pat Olliffe got the assignment on the strength of this try-out page showing off his version of Spidey.**


HEY, PETE -- WE WERE JUST TALKIN' ABOUT WHETHER SPIDER-MAN IS WASHED UP, OR IF HE'LL MAKE A COMEBACK AND BEAT THE SANDMAN.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
GEEZ, TINY, WHEN DID YOU GET SO FRIENDLY WITH PARKER?
HE ISN'T EVEN LISTENING -- HE'S LOST IN A FOG LIKE ALWAYS. BESIDES --

Art: Pat Olliffe/Al Vey w/ Tom Eklund

"We're going to see Spider-Man interact with other people besides Flash and Liz," notes Busiek, who has created a whole supporting cast at Peter's high school.

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Warrior's Quest

More than a bad girl, William Tucci's Shi is on an epic journey of self-discovery.

By JOE NAZZARO

Art: William Tucci

It's not easy for an independent comic book publisher to succeed in today's glutted marketplace, where buyers are confronted with a mind-boggling number of titles. That's what makes the success of Crusade Comics' *Shi*, the epic saga of a renegade female warrior on a search for self-discovery, all the more surprising. The book was created by industry newcomer William Tucci, who has managed to combine action-adventure with a unique historical sensibility, turning it into a consistent top-ten seller.

As Tucci recalls, the idea for *Shi* actually started to germinate in the late '80s, although the character and storyline went through numerous changes over the next few years. "Shi actually started off as a male character, and around 1990, I switched her to female, because I was in school at the time, doing a lot of fashion illustration. At the time, I also wanted to do it as a film, not a comic book, because you didn't really see many female leads carrying an entire film, especially an action film. It's much more than an action story, because there are so many psychological and religious aspects to it as well. *Shi* is really a collection of stories following the journey of this particular character."

Ironically, Tucci admits he wasn't much of a comics fan until college, and even then the idea of publishing his own book wasn't a consideration. "I had never really read comics, but my friends would lend me *The Dark Knight Returns* and some of the *Punisher* books to look over. I thought they were great, but for some reason I never really got into them, because I didn't know if you could really make a living doing them.

"I just wanted to tell this story, so I finally said, 'Let me make this a comic book,' and that was much easier said than done. I tried to get into the business for two years, and would go to conventions where the editors would say, 'At Marvel, we really like to do it like this,' or with DC, 'This doesn't look like a DC face.' I tried to go along with their guidelines, but suddenly my artwork wasn't really my own anymore.

"I remember sitting on line at the San Diego ComiCon in 1993, and everybody's portfolios looked the same. They were all Jim Lee rip-offs, and I just wasn't happy with that at all. Finally, I said, 'The hell with it, I'm just going to draw in my own style and my own way of storytelling,' and it seems that the industry has embraced it. That's how it came about, and I think my lack of comic book experience actually helped me out."

In Tucci's case, ignorance may have been one of his biggest assets. Blissfully unaware of the perils of self-publishing, he simply plunged in with both feet. "I went up against many potential pitfalls: guys who wanted to steal the characters, people who said they had the money to back me up and didn't; it was a really rough time. Anything that could possibly go wrong *did* go wrong ten-fold. It would have been so easy for

Art: William Tucci/Nelson Ascarelo

From the mists of Japanese folklore, writer/artist/creator/publisher William Tucci has created a tougher-than-nails heroine for the '90s—*Shi*.

ARASHI SHOWS US HIS NOT COVERED
WITH TATTOOS THAT TIE HIM TO BLOOD SPILLED BACK IN JAPAN
MAY I REMIND YOU THAT MY CLIENT IS THE VICTIM HERE, NOT A SUSPECT
AND THAT HIS OPEN SPIRIT OF COOPERATION

Art: William Tucci

"*Shi* is really a collection of stories following the journey of this particular character," Tucci says of his book that tells the oft-times violent tale of Ana Ishikawa.

me to quit, but the wheels were already in motion, and once you start something and you feel passionate about it, there's no way that I was going to let this book not come out.

"I actually ended up raising about $5,000 from my friends to pay for my advertising for the distributor catalogs, and then I pretty much told everybody—the distributors, the separators, the colorists and the printers—that the book was going to sell. They believed me, and lo and behold, it took off!"

According to Tucci, *Shi* is really an epic trilogy that will take anywhere between five and 10 years to tell. The first 12-issue story arc is "The Way of the Warrior," which sets the stage for what the writer calls one woman's journey of self-discovery.

"The main character, Ana Ishikawa, is a product of two very different cultures. Her father belongs to a secret order of Sohei warriors, who have carried on for centuries. They're like knights; not samurai, not ninja, but Sohei, the descendants of the warrior monks who were ordained by the Buddhist priests of medieval Japan.

"Ana's mother is a white Christian missionary living in Japan. Her parents' marriage threw a kink in the chain of Sohei, because they were originally brought down from glory by a Shogun who was influenced by Christianity, and even converted to it, some say. Anyway, they see this Christian infiltration coming in again, and poisoning the ranks of the Sohei and bringing about their downfall, so her father and brother are actually killed.

"In the 'Way of the Warrior' story arc, Ana has now grown up as part of these two environments. She isn't really accepted by either. She's Amerasian; she's a half-breed and a Christian, but she's honor-bound to find her father's killer. That's the story in a nutshell, but there are many different levels to it."

Shi's nemesis is Masahito Arashi, the former Yakuza lieutenant who murdered her father and brother 20 years earlier. "He has since abandoned his Yakuza ways and is now a real estate mogul living in New York. Shi actually attacks him through his men, chopping the legs from underneath the table so the table will fall," explains Tucci. "After she goes to a funeral service that Arashi holds for his men, she sees the children and the widows of the men she has slain in battle, and realizes that this war is much broader than she had thought it was. When the Punisher mows down a whole bunch of people, you don't really think that each person is somebody's father or brother or son, but she sees that, and decides that the war is over. Two wrongs don't make a right, to oversimplify it. But the problem now is that Arashi wants revenge, so Ana is now going to be the hunted, which will be very interesting."

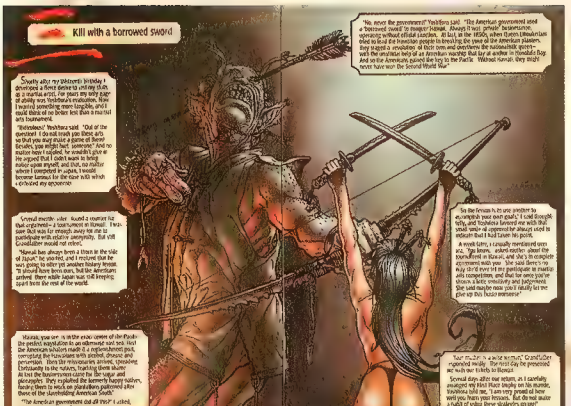
Although *Shi* was caught in the "bad girl" comic book frenzy, Tucci adamantly states that *Shi* is one of a kind. "She doesn't have huge boobs either."

AS I DISROBED I TRIED TO RECALL SUN-TZU: "USE YOUR WOMAN'S CHARMS..."
FINALLY, I COULD STAND BEFORE THEM AS I WAS, AND LET THEM SEE WHAT IN TRUTH THEY HAD ALLOWED TO ENTER.

Art: William Tucci

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

All Shi Art & Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1995 William Elliott Tucci


Kill with a borrowed sword
"No, never the government!" Yoshitomo said. "The American government used a 'borrowed sword' to invade Hawaii. Always it was 'private' businessmen, operating without official sanction. At last, in the 1850s, when Queen Liliuokalani tried to lead the Hawaiian people to breaking the yoke of the American planters, they staged a revolution of their own and overthrew the hapless little monarch. Then they asked the U.S. government to annex Hawaii. But lay at anchor in Honolulu Bay and the American Pacific Fleet was the fleet. Without Hawaii, they might never have won the Second World War."
Art: Geof Darrow

"I'm taking Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* and introducing it to the American culture, and I'm using *Shi* as a vehicle to identify with it," explains Tucci of *Senryaku*.

In addition to the two main protagonists, *Shi* features several supporting characters who find themselves involved in the conflict—in some cases, very actively involved. "We'll meet two police officers who are investigating the 'Shi murders.' One is an older, veteran cop, the other is a young hotshot, who starts to develop a relationship with Ana, but I don't want to go into what's going to happen with him.

"Other characters include Arashi's right-hand man, Koji. Arashi is his lord, and he's really going to become a principal character in the storyline. We'll also be introducing the Nara Warriors, the Sohei's most bitter enemies since 711 AD. That's when the capitol was moved from Nara to Kyoto in Japan, and the Nara monks and Kyoto monks would battle over prestige. Now, Arashi brings in the Nara monks to find this Kyoto Sohei, or warrior monk, who's hunting *him*.

"Tomoe is the leader of the Nara Warriors, and she just happens to be one of Ana's closest friends from college. She'll be branching into her own mini-series, starting in January. The two stories will run parallel to each other, intersecting at several points."

The conflict between Ana and her old friend will add another level of complexity to the *Shi* storyline. "As the Nara Warriors are hunting this Sohei," Tucci elaborates, "you'll see two very different sides to the same story: Tomoe's view and Ana's view. We'll see that Tomoe and the Nara Warriors are *not* just killing machines, they're there to hunt someone who has been their lifelong enemy. They have to fight because of a war that began hundreds of years before any of them were born. This is just something they have to do, like a soldier who has been drafted into war, and so we're going to be focusing on all these characters as they go back and forth. This story is really about hope and the triumph of the human spirit, which you'll start to see as the story unfolds."

Unlike many comic book series, which play fast and loose with real-life historical events, Tucci spent a great deal of time researching Japanese culture and history to make *Shi* as authentic as possible. "I read a lot, and spent every dime I had on books. I also watched a *lot* of films—Japanese films, Akira Kurosawa films; I can't tell you how much research was involved in this story. That's why we get many people who don't read comics picking up this book and reading it, because of all the research and history that goes along with it.

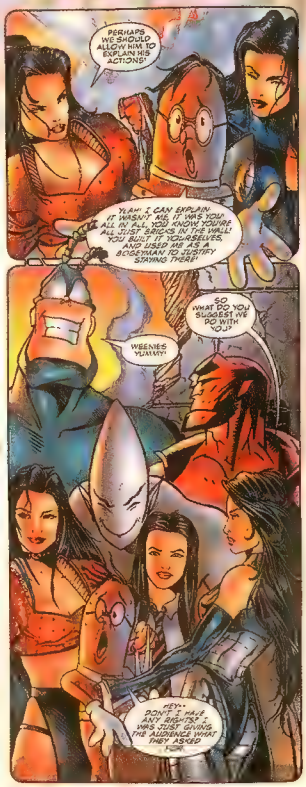
"What I did was try to bring something that was over there—Japan—and bring it here to America. People seem to have embraced that. With every issue, I get letters saying, 'This is the first comic book I ever read,' and we've gotten a lot of attention from the film industry too."

While *Shi* has enjoyed a great deal of attention as part of the "bad girl" craze that's currently sweeping through the comic industry, Tucci insists his heroine is far from the archetypal scantily-clad psychopath. "It's pretty funny how *Lady Death*, *Vampirella* and *Shi* all came out around the same time, but it's not like these bandwagon books out now, which are like T & A books, really misogynistic, with women walking around in thongs and leather bathing suits, fishnets and heels, blowing dudes away. I don't think my book is like that at all.

"In the first issue, Ana is nude and she's meditating, but the thing is, the Sohei used to meditate in the nude to be at one with the Earth. I didn't do that to sell books, because it's on the inside, and everything is covered up. She doesn't have huge boobs either.

"With *Lady Death*, *Vampirella* and *Shi*, we've actually started a sub-genre that many women can identify with. We receive many letters from women who are pleasantly surprised. In the beginning, when *Shi* started to sell, it was all word of mouth, and what sold the book was the story and art. There are still many people who are resistant

"I think it's going to introduce many people to the independent movement," Tucci offers of *The Battle for Independents*, a one-shot with a few guest stars.


PERHAPS WE SHOULD ALLOW HIM TO EXPLAIN HIS ACTIONS!
YEAH! I CAN EXPLAIN IT WASN'T ME, IT WAS YOU ALL IN ALL, YOU KNOW YOU'RE ALL JUST BRICKS IN THE WALL! YOU BUILT IT YOURSELVES, AND USED ME AS A SCAPEGOAT TO JUSTIFY STAYING THERE!
SO WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST WE DO WITH YOU?
WEENIES YUMMY!
HEY! DON'T I HAVE ANY RIGHTS? WAS I JUST SAVING THE AUDIENCE WHAT THEY ASKED FOR?
Art: William Tucci/Nelson Asencio/Jimmy Palmiotti

WHEN WE PLACE SALVATION ITSELF AT STAKE, PERPLEXITY DISAPPEARS.
AND THE CHOICES BECOME VERY CLEAR.
TO TURN FROM THE SWORD, TOWARDS
ILLUMINATION
TO HONOR NOT ONLY THE DEATH OF MY FATHER,
BUT TO EMBRACE
THE LIGHT SENT BY THE SON OF OUR FATHER.
REDEMPTION

"The story is really about hope and the triumph of the human spirit," reveals Tucci.

Art: William Tucci

Art: William Tucci

"What I did [with *Shi*] was try to bring something that was over there—Japan—and bring it here to America," says Tucci.

to picking it up, who might pick up one of these other books and think my book is cut from the same cloth, but I don't think they're the same at all."

In addition to *Shi* and the intersecting *Tomoe* mini-series, Crusade is also publishing *Senryaku*, a limited series that features some of the industry's top talent in a very different format.

"It's rather difficult to explain, but if you look at a book of Confucius, and the way he explains things to you on a grander scale, he makes it easier for you to understand. It's like where the Japanese took a lot of the culture from the Chinese and introduced it to Japan; that's what I'm doing now. I'm taking Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* and introducing it to the American culture, and I'm using *Shi* as a vehicle to identify with it. The readers know *Shi*, so now I'm using her to illustrate the 36 stratagems from the Japanese art of war, using the biggest and best talents in the industry.

"What I did was give them a stratagem, and Gary Cohn wrote separate short stories of Shi throughout her life and how she used a certain stratagem, or one that was used on her. It's almost like the *Shi* bible, and we're doing it with these great artists like Dan Jurgens and Geof Darrow. Some of them have depicted Shi in period pieces or in medieval armor, and we've really had a lot of positive response."

As *Senryaku* demonstrates in a very visible manner, Tucci is an avid promoter of his fellow independent publishers. That mutual support network has produced some interesting results, including a unique jam book, *The Battle for Independents*. The Shi/Cyblade cross-over, which features a host of unusual guest stars, appeared this fall.

"We have more than 50 independent characters in that book alone, ranging from Crack Babies to Bone to Cerebus. Some of the characters are more well-known than others, but it's a really interesting book. I did a cross-over with Marc Silvestri, and the Crusade version comes out a few weeks after the Image version. Jeff Smith drew Bone and really helped me out, and so did Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, who drew their own characters. I ended up drawing many of the other characters, along with my assistant Nelson Asencio.

"The book is unlike anything I've seen before, and I think it's going to introduce many people to the independent movement. It opens with Shi and Cyblade safely behind this wall, and Cerebus tells them to go over the wall, to find a land of wonderful creatures. What they actually find is a land run by this corporate monster who captures them and tries to get all the information from them. This monster feeds on creations, and as it does, continues to grow. It's really a metaphor for how creators have had their products stolen from them. Finally, they break out and have the independents working together in a way that they can break down

(continued on page 64)

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A Cartoon Conversation

By GREGORY J.M. CATSOS

One of the great Warner Bros. animation directors, Isadore "Friz" Freleng has drawn himself a place in film history.

Marking his place in animation history, Friz Freleng recalls days with Bugs, Daffy, Porky & the Pink Panther.

Art: Geoffrey Prods./Mirisch Corp./DePatie-Freleng Ent., Inc. Selected Photos & Art: Courtesy Gregory J.M. Catsos

As an animation director, Friz Freleng worked for Disney, Warner Bros., MGM and his own firm, DePatie-Freleng. In his long career, he created Porky Pig, Tweety & Sylvester, Yosemite Sam and the Pink Panther. He helped develop Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and countless others. And in the process, he became a legend in animation.

Born in 1906, Freleng (previously profiled in CS#7) joined Disney in 1927, later moving on to Leon Schlesinger Productions, which supplied the cartoons distributed by Warner Bros. (which eventually absorbed the "Termite Terrace" operation). When Warners closed its theatrical cartoon operation, Freleng and David DePatie teamed for DePatie-Freleng, bringing the Pink Panther to animated life. In recent years, Freleng created limited-edition cel prints of his classic characters. He died on May 26, 1995.

This conversation is comprised of two interviews conducted with Freleng in 1986 and 1994, both done for an unpublished book on animation history. The talk begins, appropriately, with the naming of names.

COMICS SCENE: Your real name is Isadore Freleng. How did you get the name "Friz"?

FRIZ FRELENG: It's a pen name. Mike Maltese, the [cartoon] gag writer, is the guy who suggested that. When I was working with Hugh Harman and Rudy Ising, there was a writer on the *Los Angeles Examiner* who wrote about a fictitious senator. And he gave him the name of Senator Frisby. So, Hugh Harman started calling me Frisby. Then, one day, Mike Maltese came up and said, "Why don't you use that name on screen instead of I. Freleng?" because we had trouble down South with selling cartoons with my name on them, because it was a Jewish name. Down South, of course, there were a lot of bigots. So, I shortened Frisby to Friz. People ask me now, "Who is Isadore Freleng? Is it your brother or your father?" It's confusing to many people. But Isadore Freleng and I. Freleng are me.

CS: Did you make the Warner Bros. cartoons for children or adults?

FRELENG: We *didn't* make them for children. We made them for adults. But the cartoons ended up in children's programming.

CS: You worked briefly for Walt Disney, in the 1920s. Harman and Ising were also at his studio. How did Disney react to your talent?

FRELENG: One time, I was working on a cartoon. I had to do a scene where a mother cat was bathing her little kittens in a big wooden tub. The kittens would jump out and she had to keep putting them back in. In the scene, which was a close-up, the little kitten climbed out of the tub and hung on the edge, and dropped down to the floor like a little kid would. I made the cat act like a kid. The other animators were letting the kittens jump right out. Later, Walt called everybody's attention to this. He said, "Come here and look at this scene, the way that Friz did it. He made that little kitten crawl out of the tub like a little kid that didn't have the strength to jump out and was afraid to fall down. That gave that kitten some character!" And Walt was so conscious of character and personality. I was also very conscious of that. I didn't want to do a character that had no depth and personality to it.

Ub Iwerks, at Disney, was a master at animation, but had a problem when it came to the characters' personalities. He could make guys running, but the characters had no personality. Personality was what Walt was looking for. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, each dwarf had a distinct personality. That's what Walt told all the animators that he wanted to see in animation—personality! He didn't care what the character looked like. Walt wanted to see how he *acted*. And that was my forte all the way through my career. I felt that the character had to have a definite personality if it were ever to take hold with the public.

CS: One definite personality you created was the volatile and mean-spirited Yosemite Sam, who was introduced in the Bugs cartoon "Hare Trigger"(1945).

FRELENG: There was Yosemite Sam, Sylvester and Tweety, Porky Pig, but the Pink Panther had a personality that was very hard to work with. The voice gives characters a certain personality. That's all they do in cartoons today. They have voices, but the characters don't act anything like the voice suggests. The mouth moves and that's it—they don't have a personality. Years ago, the live-action characters on screen—Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy,

"I have no idea what I am going to write," Henry Mancini admitted to Freleng, who had to time his animation to the unwritten music for what became an unforgettable title sequence.

Art: Geoffrey Prods./Mirisch Corp./DePatie-Freleng Ent., Inc.

Design & Layout: Yvonne Jang

According to Freleng, his cartoons were made for a short run only, but to his delight they have been embraced by successive generations.

Jimmy Cagney, Humphrey Bogart, Jimmy Stewart—had *definite* personalities. When you saw them in a film, you remembered them. And that's what made them stand up above the others. There are other actors you can't remember. But you remember those with a distinct personality. And that's what I've tried to inject into my animation. Very few do that today and that's why you don't know some of those characters.

CS: Did you ever think any of the characters you created wouldn't go over?

FRELENG: Oh, sure! We couldn't guarantee anything. If the character didn't take hold, we never tried it again. I know that some characters were never as popular as others. If you could do all Bugs Bunnys, you would probably have all successes, but I could be tired of doing them. That's why we created an incidental character in a cartoon—a new character. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't. There was another mouse character I created for Speedy Gonzales: Slowpoke Rodriguez. He was a cousin of Speedy's. But I stopped using him, because this mouse talked and moved too slowly. And it slowed the cartoon down. He used up so much of the picture. We only had six minutes to tell a story. I also used two crows from Tacos—two dumb Mexican crows—but we dropped them later. In the Sylvester cartoons, I created another cat. He was a real idiot cat. But those characters couldn't carry a picture alone. But Bugs, Porky, Daffy, Tweety, Sylvester, Yosemite Sam—those characters carry every picture.

CS: One character that didn't last too long in theatrical cartoons, although he has been successful in merchandising and his own TV series, was Bob McKimson's Tasmanian Devil. McKimson only directed five of them. You directed one, "Fright Before Christmas" (1979), for a Bugs Bunny TV special. Did you like the Tasmanian Devil character?

FRELENG: No. It wasn't a character to me because you didn't know what to do with him, just howling and growling. The Tasmanian Devil had no personality that you could pin down. You couldn't use him in any other way but that. But those cartoons *weren't* too popular at the time in theaters.

CS: You worked on the very first Looney Tunes cartoon in 1930, called "Sinkin' in the Bathtub."

FRELENG: That was another highlight of my life. It was my first cartoon at Warner Bros. and it was real professional then. It was done in the Vitaphone process of sound-on-disk. When we started, Warners had been using records from 1926 on. But they got rid of that process in a few years, and Warners used sound-on-film instead.

CS: What was the difference between a Looney Tunes cartoon and a Merrie Melodies cartoon?

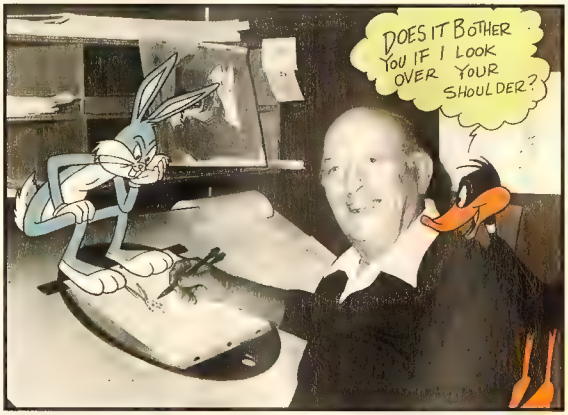
FRELENG: *None!* There wasn't a difference. When we first started with Bosko, in 1930, we called them Looney Tunes. They were in black and white. Then, after we made a number of them, Warner Bros. told us, "We would like to have another series of cartoons, but give it another name so we can sell them as two different series." So, we thought of another musical title and called it Merrie Melodies. When [producer] Leon Schlesinger took over the studio, he wanted more and more cartoons because, in the old days, the theaters used to change their films every week. And we started making about 48 cartoons a year.

CS: What are the Blue Ribbon cartoons?

FRELENG: They were reissues. That was another way of selling the same cartoon to the theaters. Warners just took the titles off them and re-ran them. Warners also took a lot of our names off the credits, which was a pretty bad thing to do. But we had no control over this.

CS: What was your opinion of Mel Blanc, who did almost all the cartoon voices?

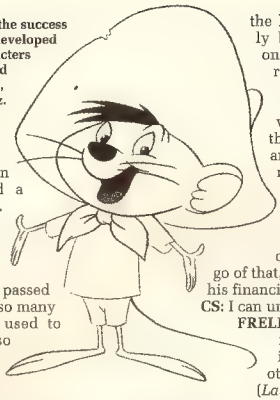
FRELENG: I thought Mel Blanc was a great talent, a great voice. Luckily, we were stuck with him. I wish he was around now. We all miss him. In fact,



Photos Copyright 1981 Warner Bros.

Freleng was quite sure why his cartoon stars endure. "They all had a definite distinct personality," he maintained.

In an effort to duplicate the success of Bugs Bunny, Freleng developed some popular new characters like Speedy Gonzales and some that were forgotten, like Slowpoke Rodriguez.



Mel could also sing, too, and in tune. If we wanted him to sing in the cartoon, he had a good sense of rhythm. He could sing well in the character's voice. Mel started in 1936 and stayed with Warner Bros. until he passed away (1989). Mel did so many voices. Jack Warner used to say, "Quit using so many voices in your cartoons. Use the same guy!" Of course, some of the voices Mel could not do. He didn't do Granny. June Foray did Granny and Bea Benaderet did some voices. But Mel did most of the voices, except certain ones, like Elmer Fudd. That was done by Art Bryan. Then, when Bryan passed away (1958), Mel did Elmer Fudd's voice.

CS: Blanc claimed you sped up some of his voices.

FRELENG: With Mel's voice, sometimes we tricked it up. Daffy Duck was sped up. We sped up the track. Sylvester was normal, but when Mel did Tweety we also sped that up to a certain speed. We raised the pitch of his voice. We took the lows out of some voices and put highs in it. We played around with the voice tracks. But not with Yosemite Sam. We had Mel yell as loud as he could. Mel *didn't* like to do Yosemite Sam. He said it hurt his throat. But whenever I did a picture with Bugs Bunny, I liked to use Yosemite Sam with Bugs where I could. Yosemite Sam was the perfect opponent for Bugs because there are no subtleties in Sam's character. He was an *absolute* villain.

Mel got such notoriety that some people think he created all these cartoon characters. Mel Blanc supplied the voice, but *not* the direction. If my wife said, "My husband does Bugs Bunny and Porky Pig," people would say, "Is his name Mel Blanc?" This has gone on for so long that the whole world feels that Mel Blanc created all those cartoon characters rather than us [Freleng, Chuck Jones, Tex Avery, Bob Clampett, McKimson, etc.] It was a strange situation for us. But Mel had good publicity people. And Mel also had an exclusive deal with Warner Bros. where they couldn't use anybody else but him. He reaped the harvest financially because he's the only one who got residuals, the only one out of *all* those people who worked for the Warner Bros. animation department and who created those characters. Mel Blanc cashed in! (*Laughs*) He didn't want to let go of that, because it was to his financial benefit.

CS: I can understand that.

FRELENG: Well, you may understand it, but a lot of other people don't. (*Laughs*)

CS: The Warner Bros. animation department had story conferences. What were they about? Was Blanc part of the conferences, as he claimed?

FRELENG: Let me explain. When we wrote the storyboards, sometimes Mel came in if there was a new character, and we went over the storyboard with him. We would say, "Could you give us another voice for this cartoon?" He would say, "How about this?" or "How about that?" and he would demonstrate the voice. We would already have something in mind because we had all the sketches made, and it was ready for animation. Before we recorded the cartoon, we had a preconceived idea of what we wanted in the voices.

CS: So when you or Chuck Jones or Joe Barbera direct a cartoon, you tell the actor about certain vocal inflections to use in the character.

FRELENG: That's right, because we know what the character is about and what he should sound like. The picture was always all planned before we recorded the voice, or voices. We knew that the lines had to fit the situation that we created. So, we would just tell Mel what we wanted. Sometimes we would repeat the line itself and he would do the line over.

CS: Then it was sort of a strange marriage of Mel Blanc and the animators. Without your characters, he wouldn't have become as famous.

FRELENG: Right! But probably without his voices, we would have *never* made it, either. Mel Blanc was very artistic and creative. I give him a lot of credit for doing those voices and making the characters what they are. He was the key to the Warner Bros. cartoons, the key to *everything* we did. It all hinged around his voice. It's like the *Pink Panther* cartoons and Henry Mancini's music. If it hadn't been that combination, I don't know if the character would have made it.

CS: The Pink Panther character is funny in and of itself. However, Mancini's background music gave your cartoon a certain sophistication and pacing. The Panther actually moves in time with the music.

FRELENG: Oh, yes! That's the way I designed the character. Do you know how the Henry Mancini music came about? When I was originally working on the cartoon [the main title credits animation for the original *Pink Panther* film], I did the storyboard and then I would direct the cartoon when the Mirisch Corporation OKed it. I said to Harold Mirisch, "I would like to animate this thing to the music. What's the

When Freleng joined Warner Bros., he worked on several cartoons starring Bosko, the studio's big star of the time.

music going to be behind the titles? I want to do the titles in synchronization to the music. I want some relationship between the two!" Mirisch said, "I don't know. Henry Mancini is going to compose the music, but he hasn't written it yet!"

So after a few weeks, Mancini came over to the office and talked to me. I said, "Look! I need some help here. I want to do this cartoon to your music, but I don't know what the music is going to be." Mancini said, "I don't know either!" I said, "Well, give me something to hear to go by." He said, "I have no idea what I'm going to write." And I said, "At least, give me tempo, what you think it will be." So, Mancini started snapping his fingers. He said, "That's the beat!" And he walks out of the office.

He left and there I was. I had to figure it out. I thought, "The music must be about 12 frames to the beat." I worked on the animation and used 12 frames to the beat. We did the cartoon on a test reel. We shot a pencil test—drawings all done with a pencil—and we tested it to see if the action was OK. If not, then we would change it. This pencil reel is done before we ink and paint it. Later, Mancini said, "Give me the pencil reel. Let me see it. I have to know what the cartoon is all about!" So, I gave him the film. I had worked it all out to the beat. He studied it and then the next day he said, "We're going to record the music." He had about a 40-piece orchestra there in the studio. And later I heard, "Da da—da da—da da da da da—da da da da daaaa—da dum!" That was the first time I *ever* heard the Pink Panther theme, and it became a hit.

Art: Copyright 1981 Warner Bros.

After Warner Bros. stopped full-time production, Freleng packaged cartoon compilation movies with new linking footage for the studio.

CS: How did the Pink Panther cartoons come about? The movie was done first.

FRELENG: Let me explain that. When I was at Warner Bros. and they closed their shop, I was doing titles and commercials, whatever I could get. Blake Edwards, the director, was on the lot doing *The Great Race* (1965) and he was also finishing *The Pink Panther* (1964). So, he called me over and said, "I would like to have animated titles for this picture with Peter Sellers. I have no ideas for it. I have no completed film, but I have dailies and I have the script." So I said, "Give me the script, let me see the dailies and I'll come up with an idea." Blake did, and I did a storyboard. I went over to the Goldwyn lot, where the Mirisch Corporation was, and I presented the cartoon to them. It was a seven-and-a-half minute title. They flipped their lids! They said, "Go ahead and make it!" Of course, the picture's title was *The Pink Panther*, which initiated me to design a panther, but the panther's personality and material were very innovative. And this led me to designing the titles. From then on, we became heroes. Later, *Time* magazine wrote that the titles were better than the picture. Then, *everybody* came to us for titles. People who were standing outside the theater would ask, "Is the title of the picture on yet?" And if the ticket takers said, "Yes!" they said, "We'll come back when it starts again because we want to see the titles!" It was the longest animated title made at the time. After that, United Artists wanted us to make a series of Pink Panther cartoons. So I made "The Pink Phink" and it won an Academy Award. Mel Blanc didn't like the Pink Panther character because there was no voice for him to do. (*Laughs*)

CS: Didn't you also work out the music to your Warner Bros. cartoons?

FRELENG: Yes, it was all timed. I worked out the beat in 4/8 time phrases. I would write on a bar sheet the number of frames to each foot, so that when our composer Carl Stalling played the music, he knew that's the way it was going to be. I put the number of frames that I wanted. I used a metronome all the time. He would compose the music before he ever saw the picture. I would tell him it was outside and it's cold and Sylvester is warming himself, so he would write mood music there. And later, the animator would animate to that. So it was all pre-scored. The music depended on the situation.

CS: With the Warner Bros. cartoons you

you directed, there were impressive musical backgrounds orchestrated by Stalling.

FRELENG: We recorded the voices first, then the cartoon was animated. Then, the orchestra finalized it. Everything was done to a beat. That's the way I worked. I worked with measures: four bar phrases, eight bar phrases so it was easier for the musicians to write the music. Our musicians wrote to the bar sheets. I made all my action out on bar sheets. So, if a cat was running across the room, I had that all worked out before the musicians wrote the music to it. And the sound effects were done afterwards—although some of them we pre-scored if we wanted a certain effect. But most of the time we sat down with Treg Brown, our sound effects editor, and would say, "We want an explosion sound here!" "We want a gong there or a raucous sound here!" Also, he would create a number of sounds for us to choose from.

CS: You were responsible for the creation of Porky Pig in 1935, in a (Two-Tone) Technicolor cartoon, "I Haven't Got A Hat." But when you started with Porky Pig, Mel Blanc didn't do the voice.

FRELENG: When I came up with the first Porky Pig, I made him stutter because I wanted him to be different than all the other voices that we used. I hired a guy who *actually* stuttered, Joe Dougherty. He did the original voice of Porky. But when Dougherty did his lines, he would stutter too much and I couldn't control it. And that was terrible. We were making sound-on-film then, and film was *very* expensive. And we were afraid that if Jack Warner found out how much it was costing him, Jack would throw us off the lot. (*Laughs*) Eventually, we said, "We had better get somebody who can control his stuttering!" There was this radio announcer on [a Warners-owned station] KFWB ("Keep Fighting, Warner Bros.") right across the street. His name was Henry Blanc. He suggested that Warner Bros. use his brother. And so, Mel Blanc came over to see us at the studio to try out for Porky Pig. Now, Mel had already done a couple of voices for us before for director Frank Tashlin. But this was the first time I met Mel. I asked him, "Could you stutter on cue?" He said, "Yes!" I asked him to do Porky's voice for me, and he did an interpretation. He did it well and could control the stuttering. So, we started using Mel for Porky and I used him for other voices like Daffy Duck and Bugs Bunny.

I was the only one doing Porky for a while, until other directors like Frank Tashlin and Tex [Fred] Avery [and Jack King] started directing some of them. I didn't like Porky. I didn't enjoy doing him because Porky was too much of a square. He had *no* depth of character at all.

All Bugs Bunny & Associated Characters. Copyright 1995 Warner Bros. Inc.

"The whole world feels that Mel Blanc created all those cartoon characters," noted Freleng of the publicity-savvy voice artist.

CS: What characters did you like animating the most?

FRELENG: Bugs, Yosemite Sam, Tweety and Sylvester. I enjoyed doing them. They were fun to work with. We each had our favorites that we did and we never stepped on the other person's toes. I never did a Road Runner because that was Chuck Jones'. And he never did a Yosemite Sam because that was mine.

CS: How did you come up with the name Porky Pig?

FRELENG: The name came along because when I was a kid I had two friends—schoolmates—who were two fat kids. The oldest brother was called Porky, and the younger one, Piggy. And I had always thought of doing a cartoon strip with two kids named Porky and Piggy. But I never did. Animation came along first. When everybody started using animals in cartoons, Walt Disney began using Mickey Mouse (1928). And other animators started using characters that *resembled* Mickey Mouse. So, I had just left Harman and Ising because we weren't doing Bosko cartoons anymore and went over to Leon Schlesinger, who was doing a boy character, Buddy. I then made a couple of Buddy cartoons ("Buddy & Towser," "Buddy's Trolley Troubles"—both 1934), but I said, "This character is no good!"

I came up with an idea of doing a cartoon, "I Haven't Got a Hat." There would be a schoolroom with a bunch of kids in it, and they were all little animals. There was Ham and Ex, two twin pups who perform the song, "I Haven't Got a Hat"; Oliver Owl; a little girl kitty reciting "Mary Had a Little Lamb"; Beans, a small cat; and a school teacher who was a cow. And the teacher called up this little kid named Porky Pig, who was a fat pig who recited a poem, "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" and he stuttered. So that was the first Porky

"I didn't enjoy doing him because Porky was too much of a square. He had no depth of character at all," maintained Freleng.

Pig cartoon. From then on, I said, "I think we've got a handle on this character Porky Pig!" because Buddy didn't mean anything. It was absolutely boring. He didn't have a personality. From then on we created new characters.

CS: Did you help create Daffy Duck?

FRELENG: No, I didn't create him. Tex Avery did ("Porky's Duck Hunt," 1937). It was more or less a combination of Tex Avery and Bob Clampett ("Porky & Daffy" and "The Daffy Doc," 1938). But I did a lot of cartoons with Daffy. I tried to humanize him more than Clampett did. Daffy was a greedy kind of a guy, and very jealous. You saw that in "Show Biz Bugs" (1958) where Daffy was jealous of Bugs. So that was basically Daffy's character—his jealousy and his selfishness.

CS: How did you come up with the name Speedy Gonzales?

FRELENG: That came from a joke that Ted Pierce [and Mel Blanc] used to tell. It was about a small Mexican fellow who screwed so many women and he was so fast when he did it, the women didn't even know. So they called him Speedy Gonzales. Bob McKimson started making these cartoons with Speedy. Then, I took it over and changed the character. I made one, and the picture, "Speedy Gonzales," won an Academy Award.

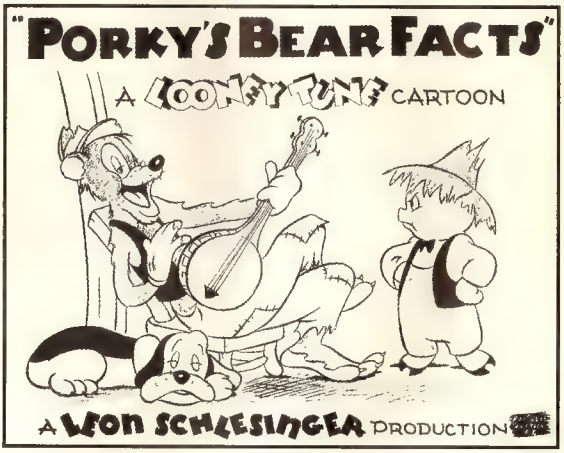
CS: Did you ever think at the time you created them that these characters would someday become legendary?

FRELENG: No, of course not. We just figured a short subject would have a short run and that was it. When we were making those cartoons, theaters ran them for a first run. Then, they ran them for a second run. Then, a third run. And then, they disappeared. We never gave it a thought that they would go beyond that. Now when you see the old cartoons, you'll see the same gags in many pictures. We figured if we ran the gags only once, every audience isn't going to see that cartoon. So let's use the same gag again in this cartoon, never dreaming that it would come back to haunt us someday (*Laughs*).

We used certain gags for certain situations we created. Basically, in most of the gags, things backfired on the character. Like, Yosemite Sam threatening Bugs. I remember in one, where Sam was hunting rabbits and he forced Bugs to get into a stove. He was going to cook him. And Bugs came out of the stove and acted like there was a party going on inside. There were balloons coming out. Bugs said, "Do you have any ashtrays? My ashtrays are all full. How about some ice?" And he tricked Sam into going in there. But the animators went to the extreme gag that when Sam opened up the oven, there was a *real* party going on. He went inside shouting, "Whoopee! Whoopee!" It was creating the situation that helped make a cartoon funny. It isn't any *one* gag. It's a combination. I never tried to stick with one gag, really. I know I tried to make every gag as different as I could.

I used to teach Tex Avery that you should keep your action going in a cartoon. Don't hold the action for a laugh. If the gag gets a laugh, fine! If it doesn't, it wasn't meant to be. You have to understand your audience to begin with. Because when I would do a cartoon, I wouldn't see it for a year. So, I had better be sure that the gag gets a laugh. A director must use his own instinct in making comedy. If you guess right most of the time, then you'll be successful.

CS: In one gag that you frequently used, Bugs Bunny would grab Elmer Fudd, or somebody else, and kiss them. This was a very strange thing having a male bunny kiss another man.



Childhood schoolmates named Porky and Piggy were Freleng's inspiration for Porky Pig, star of the Freleng-supervised "Porky's Bear Facts" from 1941.

FRELENG: Well, that was a gag. It got laughs every time. That was a characteristic of Bugs. Bugs was an aggressive character and he embarrassed the little guy, Elmer Fudd, all the time by kissing him. I don't remember how the gag started, a bunny kissing another guy, but we thought it was funny. It was comedy. That's all I ever thought it was. Any other context never even entered our minds.

CS: Joe Barbera has said that you left Warners briefly in 1938 and moved over to MGM because you were unhappy at Warners.

FRELENG: I didn't leave Warners because I was unhappy. It was because of *money*! My contract with Warners had expired and MGM offered to pay me so much more, and I couldn't resist the dollars. I couldn't turn that down. In 1937, Fred Quimby [animation producer] at MGM had called me up and offered to have me supervise his newly created cartoon studio. MGM was an outstanding company at the time. Quimby painted a very beautiful picture for me. He told me I could hire anyone I wanted and that money was no object. Quimby also told me I could use any character I saw fit. Well, when I got there, I found out that the promises were just promises and that's all. He never lived up to anything promised. I was supposed to be the producer of the cartoons, but when I got there they had other producers, and they didn't know animation as well as I did. And Fred Quimby got all the credit and all the Oscars for the MGM cartoons. I don't think Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera picked up any of the Oscars for their *Tom & Jerry* cartoons. But Quimby's name was on those cartoons. So MGM wasn't my cup of tea and I decided to return to Warner Bros. [in 1939]. I got out of there as soon as I could. I was only at MGM for about a year and a half.

CS: You directed four of MGM's Captain and the Kids cartoon series—"Poultry Pirates," "Pygmy Hunt," "The Winning Ticket"—all done in 1938. And in 1939, a color one, "Petunia National Park." Were you happy directing these?

FRELENG: No! It was a mistake. I knew they were going to be bad when I started, but MGM committed to doing them. So, I was stuck with them and had to do the best I could with them. But I knew those characters—those Katzenjammer kids would *never* be popular because they were mean kids and spoke with a German accent. They weren't likable kids at all. But MGM had committed to do these cartoons, so I had to do them. That's why I was very unhappy there. At MGM, there were people dictating to me. At Warner Bros. I did what I wanted to do. At MGM, I thought it was going to be the same. In fact, they gave me the impression I would be able to do what I wanted to.

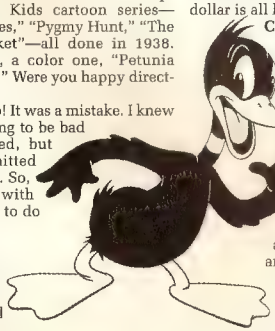
CS: What kind of producer was Leon Schlesinger?

FRELENG: Oh, he was about as interested as the dollar made him. He was interested more in how much the cartoons were making for him. He didn't really care *about* the cartoons. He would look at the cartoon and say, "That's good!" Sometimes he sat in on the meetings where we wrote the stories for the cartoons. But he didn't have too much to say. He gave us free rein, most of the time. We didn't get out of control like Bob Clampett's cartoons did. Schlesinger felt that Clampett's cartoons used to get way out of control. Clampett didn't use good taste. But we didn't do anything that might be censored.

Many of us used to write and produce our own cartoons. Bob McKimson didn't have the ability to write or produce a cartoon, so we would help him out. We helped him put gags in. Not all cartoon directors had the ability to be their own producers.

CS: Blanc and Jones had negative things to say about Schlesinger. How did you feel about him?

FRELENG: He was all right with me. I had no qualms working for him. He left the animators alone. He got some good pictures and some bad ones, and the good ones stood up. But he had no interest in the quality of the cartoons. He was so busy with other things. The dollar is all he cared about.



"I did a lot of cartoons with Daffy. I tried to humanize him more than [Bob] Clampett did," explained Freleng.

CS: Schlesinger made a live-action appearance in your Daffy Duck cartoon, "You Ought to be in Pictures" (1940), where Daffy persuades Porky Pig to terminate his studio contract. Whose idea was this?

FRELENG: It was mine. I wanted to try to blend live action with animation. We animated only Porky and Daffy. I did all that live-action for $400. Johnny Burton was the cameraman. I used the animators, like Mike Maltese, as actors. Maltese plays the studio guard. I shot the thing with one camera. It made an impression at the time.

CS: You used live action blended with animation in *My Dream Is Yours* (1949).

FRELENG: That's right. The director was Michael (*Casablanca*) Curtiz. He was a Hungarian. He had a problem speaking English. They used to tease him in Hollywood because of the funny things he would say like, "The next time I send a fool for something, I go myself!"

When Mike was making *My Dream is Yours* for Warner Bros., he needed a Bugs Bunny dream sequence. Jack Carson had to wear a Bugs Bunny suit and Doris Day also had a rabbit suit on. And it was real hot because those soundstages were not air-conditioned. Jack complained about the suit, but Doris didn't complain at all. They danced together and I put Bugs and Tweety and some other characters in, dancing with them.

I made a storyboard for the picture, and later I had to be on the set with the director and tell him what was going on in the scene. It was necessary for the animators to be on the soundstage. The director didn't understand animation, or *how* we did it. So, I explained to Mike that the storyboard had little balloons on it, and when they popped, an animated character came out. Every time a balloon popped, another character came out. Then, they all started dancing to the music with Jack Carson and Doris Day.

They shot the scene with live action and there was nothing there in the background. Later, when I got the film, I put the characters in. When Jack and Doris danced, Curtiz left a space for the animated characters. We made block mattes. We had to matte out where the character was, and we shot it twice. I had left a space on the film. Then, we printed it and the animated characters came in. When Jack and Doris danced, we made the cartoon characters do the same thing. It's the same thing Hanna-Barbera did with Tom & Jerry in a few pictures at MGM. Gene Kelly danced with Jerry the mouse (*Anchors Away*, 1945). They looked at each frame and made Jerry do the same thing as Gene. The audience sees it and thinks that the mouse dances just like Gene Kelly. Studios don't do that [filming technique] today because they now have computers. They can put an animated character in wherever they want.

CS: How did Edward Selzer become involved with Warner Bros.?

FRELENG: When Warners bought out Schlesinger (1944) for about $700,000, they had to have somebody who represented Warner Bros. to manage their money. They appointed Selzer, Harry

Daffy tries his best to convince producer Leon Schlesinger that he's a better cartoon star than Porky in Freleng's "You Ought to Be In Pictures."

Warner's friend. Selzer didn't know anything about animation, or even how it was done. I remember my first conversation with him was when I did a cartoon about a woodpecker and a cat, Sylvester. I was going to make another one. And I said to Selzer, "Instead of the woodpecker, this time I'll put this Tweety Pie character in it, a canary!" Selzer said, "No way! That's *not* your hero. It's the cat!" I said, "No, it'll be a much better picture if I put this Tweety Bird character in it." Tweety had a baby look, the innocent look. Naturally, the audience would feel sympathy for the baby. Well, we got in an argument about it. And I was senior director at the time. I said, "Look, Eddie! You've been in the business for only six months, and I've been in it for 15 years. And you think you know more than I do. If you learned more in six months than I did in 15 years, then *you're* the guy who should be directing this cartoon!" I handed him the pencil, said, "Goodbye!" and walked out. That evening he called me at my home, and said, "Come on back! You do it your own way!" That picture, when I finished it, won an Academy Award. It was the *first* Warners cartoon to win.

When Bob Clampett had Tweety, he made him an aggressive little character. Tweety beat the crap out of cats. (*Laughs*) But when I took over, I redesigned the character. I made Tweety a helpless little thing and Sylvester the villain. When I teamed Sylvester with Tweety, that made a difference. The same thing happened with Speedy Gonzales. Bob McKimson made one ("Cat-Tails for Two," 1953) and it wasn't anything exciting. When I took it over with "Speedy Gonzales" (1955), it was an Oscar winner.

CS: Your cartoons "Tweety Pie" (1947), "Speedy Gonzales," "Birds Anonymous" (1957), "Knighty-Knight Bugs" (1958) and "The Pink Phink" (1964) all won Oscars. How did you feel when they won?

FRELENG: Very ecstatic. Of course, it was the thrill of my life. I had won four before, at Warners, but I had *never* accepted them in person. Eddie Selzer accepted the first three because the Academy at that time wouldn't let anybody but the producer get the awards. The cartoon directors never got the awards even though they made the pictures. That was the Academy rule. Eddie and John Burton got four of the ones that I would have had. Burton was a producer for about six months and he walked away with the last Oscar [for "Knighty-Knight Bugs"]. I felt bad that other people accepted those Oscars who didn't deserve them. Athough I made those four cartoons at Warners, and the producers had nothing to do with them, I couldn't get any statues. I was a producer only *after* I got away from Warners.

The only time I was presented with the Oscar itself was when I was a producer for the Pink Panther cartoon, "The Pink Phink." And David DePatie got a duplicate of the award because he was also a producer and the general manager of DePatie-Freleng. But I was the creative producer. When I got up to accept the award for "The Pink Phink," I couldn't remember the speech I had rehearsed for days. I couldn't even remember the two words, "Thank you." I could only remember, "Thanks." That's all I ended up saying.

I have two Oscars on my mantelpiece—Eddie Selzer gave me one from Warner Bros.—and three Emmys. But my pictures won five. So that was the big highlight of my life, when the Academy honored me.

CS: Sylvester the cat was Tweety's nemesis. What kind of restrictions did you have with that character?

FRELENG: The only restriction I had was I had to keep him as an alley cat with a vicious intent. He didn't really belong to anybody. That's the way I created the character. I created Sylvester in a cartoon called "Life With Feathers" (1945), which was nominated for an Academy Award. In the cartoon, a lovebird has a falling-out with his sweetheart, and he wants to commit suicide. He wants to let the cat eat him.

I designed the cat to look more like a clown. He had a big red nose and baggy pants, very short legs and a low crotch. And he was an alley cat looking through a garbage can, for food. The bird saw him and this was the bird's opportunity to try to get the cat to eat him! But when the cat grabbed him, he felt this was too easy. No bird does that. Sylvester said, "There's something wrong with you. This is not normal!" Maybe the bird was poisonous. So, the cat refused to eat the bird. And the bird kept being persistent in trying to get the cat to eat him. The cat tried to get rid of him. It was just the reverse: the bird chasing the cat. The bird even tried to force himself into the cat's mouth. Then, his mate accepted him again, and said she loved him. Sylvester realized that he wasn't a poisoned bird and went after him, and the bird tried to keep from being caught. That was the first Sylvester cartoon. But after that, I didn't keep him in the alley all the time. Some of the pictures dictated that Sylvester was an alley cat who came from nowhere. But he was also a domestic cat who lived in a home where Tweety was. Later, we brought Granny in to be Tweety's protector because he couldn't protect himself very well. There was always that contest where the cat lost.

CS: Do you think it was Tweety or Sylvester who was responsible for the success of these cartoons?

FRELENG: Sylvester. Tweety only served as a foil, but *he* received all the credit. Tweety didn't do anything but say, "I taut I taw a puttytat!" (*Laughs*) It's just the same as the Road Runner cartoons, by Chuck Jones. The Coyote was the real success of the pictures, but the Road Runner got all the credit.

The Road Runner never does a damn thing. (*Laughs*) It's the Coyote who kills himself trying to get him. I remember when Mike Maltese, the gag writer, was working with Chuck, and I was doing a cartoon where a cat chased a mouse, and the dog chased the cat, and the dog catcher chased the dog! It's what we call a "three-way chase."

Chuck and Mike said, "That's a great idea, one character chasing another. We can do the same thing." Later, they created the Road Runner and the Coyote. The formula for the Coyote is for him to defeat himself. That's what I was doing with Tweety and Sylvester. It was making the cat defeat himself. Nobody ever did anything to him. He did it to himself. Everything he planned against Tweety just backfired on him, and that's what made the comedy. Tweety did nothing but make little remarks, because he couldn't defend himself. He was too helpless a character. So the only thing that stood between Tweety and the cat was either Granny or the cat defeating himself. That was the formula that worked for Tweety, and we kept that formula *all* the time. But the situations we created were different.

CS: You, Jones, Clampett (until 1946), Avery and McKimson all directed Bugs Bunny cartoons.

FRELENG: The Bugs Bunnys were divided among us because we made about 12 a year. I did four or five, Chuck did five, Bob did four. Because if one person did all Bugs Bunny, he wouldn't have time to do anything else. So, I would do Bugs Bunnys and maybe four Tweetys, or some Daffy Ducks, and a couple of other characters. Altogether, we were doing 30 cartoons a year. I did about 10 a year. Chuck and I liked Bob McKimson because he was easy to get along with. We helped him as much as possible.

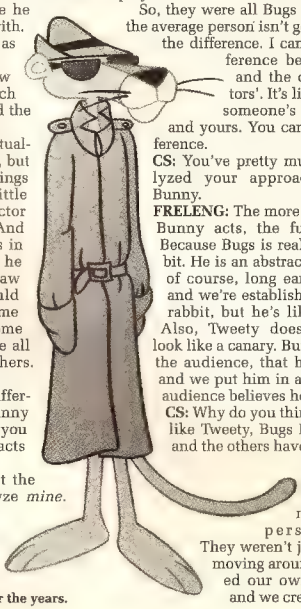
CS: Did you all borrow techniques from each other when you directed the cartoons?

FRELENG: We didn't actually steal from each other, but everybody did learn things from each other, little nuances that one director does, like Chuck Jones. And Chuck would see things in my cartoons that he applied to his. And I saw things in his that would apply to me. I took some from him, he took some from Tex, and so on. We all *learned* from the others. That's the way it went.

CS: Can you see the difference in your Bugs Bunny from the others? Would you say your Bugs Bunny acts differently?

FRELENG: Yes, it's just the style, but I can't analyze *mine*. But I can analyze Bob Clampett's and Chuck's. Clampett's was like Tex Avery's. He didn't treat the characters like they had human qualities. Clampett treated them like they were drawings, and less like characters. He would stretch them across the screen. His Bugs Bunny was a drawing and not a character personality. There was also a difference in McKimson's and mine, and a difference between mine and Chuck Jones'. It was a difference in treatment of how the character acts. Chuck Jones was very sophisticated in his approach to Bugs. Chuck was a book reader and it crept into his cartoons. He used a lot of dialogue. He was using clever dialogue for gags. Some of his lines were a little above the head of the audience, especially a kid audience. I didn't do that. I used the action, or the character's personality, but I did not let him talk too much. This was for tempo, because it would take too much time for him to say a long line. Instead, I used that time for action. Bugs could work without dialogue because he acted. Let me give you an example of personality. In "Rhapsody Rabbit" (1946), where Bugs played the piano, he pulled up his sleeves and then worked his fingers. Bugs became human. When he played the piano, he played like an ordinary person would play.

So, they were all Bugs Bunnys, and the average person isn't going to know the difference. I can tell the difference between mine and the other animators'. It's like looking at someone's handwriting and yours. You can tell the difference.



"With the Pink Panther, I have ownership, and it pays off," revealed Freleng, who received no residual pay for his Warner Bros. cartoons over the years.

CS: You've pretty much just analyzed your approach to Bugs Bunny.

FRELENG: The more human Bugs Bunny acts, the funnier it is. Because Bugs is really not a rabbit. He is an abstraction. He has, of course, long ears and a tail and we're establishing him as a rabbit, but he's like a human. Also, Tweety doesn't actually look like a canary. But we tell you, the audience, that he's a canary and we put him in a cage. So the audience believes he's a canary.

CS: Why do you think characters like Tweety, Bugs Bunny, Daffy and the others have endured for decades?

FRELENG: Because we made them personalities. They weren't just drawings moving around. We created our own characters and we created a *strong* personality for each one, every one of them. Bugs Bunny had his own unique personality, Daffy Duck had his, Porky Pig was different from them, and Yosemite Sam—they all had a definite, distinct personality. So whatever you put them in, it adds to the picture. It's like putting a star in. It helps make the picture. I took advantage of the opportunity. We were also careful that the characters didn't get out of line of their personalities. For instance, Yosemite Sam, many times he was a cowboy, an Arab, or a Trojan. He's in different costumes, but he never lost his personality. He was *always* Yosemite Sam, no matter what the costume. Daffy Duck, Bugs, Porky Pig—the same thing. They all had definite personalities and we didn't deviate from them. In fact, we guarded each other—Chuck Jones, Robert McKimson—so that we didn't get out of line.

CS: Were you surprised that these characters have lasted so long?

FRELENG: Naturally, we were all surprised. To Warners' happiness, they all cashed in on it. That means millions and millions of dollars to them. That's the reason they opened up their Warner Bros. stores. All their stores are based on these cartoon characters. The stores are doing phenomenally well.

CS: How do you feel that many of your cartoons are now available on video?

FRELENG: Well, it's all right with me. Warners is making a lot of money on the cartoons. But it doesn't do us any good! (*Laughs*) It helps our image. Maybe it placates my ego a little bit, but it *doesn't* ring the cash register at all. We don't get a nickel. With the Pink Panther, yes! I get residuals! But with Warners, Chuck and I don't get anything. We just had a job there and that was it. We had *no* ownership of the characters, and that's the difference. You see, with the Pink Panther I have ownership, and it pays off. So no matter how much a studio pays you, you're better off if you're getting a piece of the action. Of course, I've learned this now, but we had no say in the matter at that time. We only had a job and felt pretty lucky just to have a job. We never knew what our future would be. Neither did Warners. But they owned the characters and the copyrights.

CS: But are you happy that your work is being shown to people of all ages?

FRELENG: Oh yes! I still get fan mail *every* week. "Please draw me Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, the Pink Panther or Tweety Pie." I get a bag full of letters saying, "I love your cartoons." People now know me through my work. The audience today, which is a few generations later, appreciates these cartoons more than they did when they were made.

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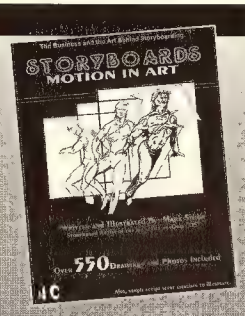

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Weisinger

(continued from page 19)

in all my career at *Superman*, my good writers left me and went into pictures or television. Like Bill Woolfolk, who wrote novels. He wrote *Superman* for me. Lynn Perkins, who wrote *Captain Marvel*, and went into high-class public-relations. Dick Lederer, who used to write *Batman* for me, is now vice-president of Warner Bros. The only ones who stayed where they are and did nothing else are the guys like Al Bester, who wrote a blue streak for me, and look what happened to him. It's a shame he hasn't done too much in the last 10 years [*i.e.* 1966-1975].

"It's a sad thing," Weisinger elaborated. "Bester should have written the sort of thing that Michael Crichton is doing—science-fiction bestsellers. When I talk to a lot of science-fiction writers, I say *'J'accuse.* Not one of you guys has written a bestseller. With all your ability and talent, you let strangers come around and write the bestsellers in science fiction, invading your market.' Philip Wylie wrote one, *Gladiator.* The only other guy who wrote a science fiction bestseller is Kurt Vonnegut. And he really *isn't* a science fiction writer, *per se.* The other guys are writing popular paperbacks, but not hardcover bestsellers [true at the time in 1975]. Isn't it a shame that Allen Drury, not an SF writer, had to write a book on space travel and it goes to the bestseller list?"

Weisinger laid the blame on an old rival SF pulp editor. "If you read a lot of science fiction today, you'll realize why they don't make it. They need guidance. You *can* be too sophisticated. Too esoteric. I think John W. Campbell was a *bad* influence through *Analog.* Everything's too gobbledygook and everybody's afraid to say the emperor's not wearing any clothes. Science fiction should be like a modern Jules Verne story. Everything is normal except one crucial element. Work from that proposition."

Weisinger's tastes in SF were old-fashioned. "I still think H.G. Wells was the greatest writer of science fiction ever," he declared. "I'll reread him once in a while. *First Men in the Moon* was the greatest novel. *The Time Machine*'s fantastic. What breaks my heart is that I always envisioned when I had a son, I would have my son read Wells and Burroughs and he would thank me. But my son said, 'I couldn't get through [Burroughs'] *Tarzan.*' It turned *me* on, but it didn't turn him on at all."

Still, Weisinger found solace in the lives his own work touched. "I was in Honolulu with my wife and we started talking with Jack Lord [of *Hawaii Five-O*]. Someone introduced me. She said, 'Mort used to be editor of *Superman.*' And he said, '*Superman*!' Jack Lord's running around like a kid and he remembered *all* the stories!

"The influence I had on other people's lives scares me," he added. "I'm astounded that people in America know such phrases as 'Up...up...and away,' 'faster than a speeding bullet,' mild-mannered reporter, and Kryptonite. Superman and Lois Lane are as well known as Romeo and Juliet.

"Many times I'm going to an airport and I talk to the driver. And he'll say, 'What do you do?' I'll answer, 'I'm a writer.' 'What do you write?' 'I'll tell you what, I'll make you a bet that you would have read what I've written or seen it on TV. And I'll let you be the judge.' He'll say, 'OK.' Then, I say, 'Ever heard of *Superman*?'

"I've never heard of anyone who *didn't*," Weisinger chuckled. "Except when I was in Russia. I told this story and they screwed it up in the fan magazine that DC puts out. I met Nikita Khruschev. And his interpreter said, 'This is Mr. Weisinger.' 'What does he do?' 'He's a journalist.' 'What kind of journalist?' The interpreter said, 'He's the editor of *Superman*,' and explained that Superman is known as the Man of Steel, the champion of the oppressed.

"And Khruschev said, 'The Man of Steel cannot get through the Iron Curtain!' "

Flushed with the success of his own bestseller, *The Contest*, Mort Weisinger retired from comics in 1970 after installing his old friend Julie Schwartz as his successor. "If I had known how long this market existed, for books with a 'hot' theme, I would have quit *Superman* 10 years ago." He did occasionally lecture on the *Superman* mystique. He died in 1978, never seeing the blockbuster series of *Superman* films starring Christopher Reeve that owed so much to his concepts, much less the more recent *Lois & Clark* TV series. But he remained intensely interested in the *Superman* film project which at one point was to have been scripted by his discovery, Alfred Bester.

"The way that I would have done it," Weisinger said in 1975, "I would have the story involve Superman having to go back into the past to Krypton. I would have three-quarters of the thing on the planet Krypton. It would be a terrific thing, even greater than *2001: A Space Odyssey.* And the whole suspense is: Can Superman prevent Krypton from blowing up?"

To the end, Mort Weisinger remained true to his pulpish roots.

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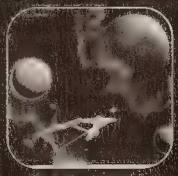
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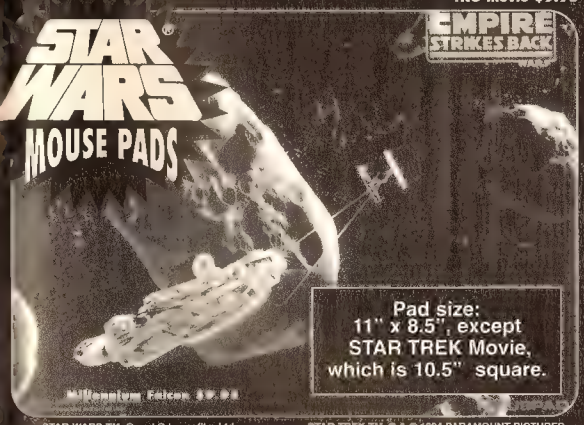

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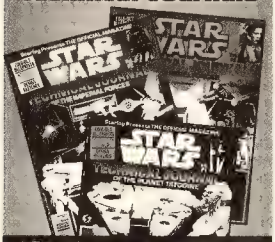

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Hatcher

(continued from page 26)

funny to me. I'm totally unaware of that stuff, except for the 1001 photos I have in my office," she jokes. "That's a result [of fame] that's really distant to me. I'm not that aware of it, and I don't think I want to be, but it's flattering."

Though she is now a major part of the *Superman* saga, Hatcher definitely is *not* a student of the history of the Man of Steel. She has seen a few episodes of the original *Superman* TV shows, sat through a couple of the *Superman* big-screen outings and has fleetingly glanced at a handful of both the classic and current comic books. And Hatcher makes no apologies for not burying herself in *Superman* lore. "When I took this role, it was never so much about playing 'Lois Lane' as it was just playing this woman who was a reporter who had this particular relationship and these particular problems. I didn't look at the work of the other actresses who have played Lois [Phyllis Coates, Noel Neill and Margot Kidder] because I don't really believe in heading into a part that way," she explains. "For me, there was really nothing to gain. It had to be specifically about *my* unique journey as Lois."

That's not to say that Hatcher didn't enjoy working with Coates, as she did briefly when Coates played Lois' mother in a would-be wedding sequence during *Lois & Clark*'s first season finale. "That was really fun," she recalls enthusiastically. "It wasn't much of a scene for Phyllis, but it was really great that she would come and do the show. That's one of those things that's a real small moment, almost an insider's thing, orchestrated specifically for the fans. Those kinds of things are really nice to do."

As much as she loves her work on *Lois & Clark*, Hatcher believes that it's vitally important for her to stretch her acting muscles every now and then by tackling roles other than Lois Lane, star reporter for the *Daily Planet*. Thus, she has spent her last two hiatuses acting in films. Though shot a year apart, *Heaven's Prisoners* and *Two Days in the Valley* will be released within a few months of one another. In *Prisoners*, Hatcher portrays Claudette, a Cajun woman married to a New Orleans crime boss played by Eric Roberts. "It's an action-drama with a great script and great people like Alec [*The Shadow*] Baldwin. One of the things that drew me to it," she states, "is that it was quite a challenging role and the antithesis of Lois Lane. It's also something people haven't seen me do yet, which is heavy drama. Claudette is very manipulative, very hard—really an ugly kind of person. One of the challenges for me was to get to that place where you have to remove all variety and just immerse yourself in this very hard person."

Hatcher portrays an Olympic skier named Becky in *Two Days in the Valley*, which co-stars James (*StarGate*) Spader, Jeff (*Arachnophobia*) Daniels and Eric (*The Prophecy*) Stoltz. Becky is a rather bitter woman, having placed fourth at every Olympics in which she has participated. Though most people would consider being the fourth best in the world at anything an extraordinary accomplishment, Becky believes she's a loser. "That competitive drive within her drives her into making a decision that basically gets a ball rolling that she's unable to stop. It results in a tragic ending for her," reveals Hatcher. "It was different part for me and it was different enough from Claudette to make it another exciting challenge."

Reviewing Hatcher's résumé, one can't help but notice that the actress has but one bona fide pre-*Lois & Clark* genre credit, and that would be the "Outrageous Okona" episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. In that comedic *Trek* outing, which aired during *Next Generation*'s second season in 1988, Hatcher essayed the minor role of transporter officer Lt. B.G. Robinson. "If you look at that episode, there's no mention of my name in the credits because it was such a small role. I was only in one or two scenes," she notes. "The main reason I did it and the thing I remember most was that I got to beam somebody up onto the *Enterprise*. Watching *Star Trek* as a kid, I felt I had to do that show because I could always say I beamed somebody up!"

Returning to *Lois & Clark*, Hatcher, who is following in Cain's footsteps and writing a *Lois & Clark* teleplay, reports that the only thing that could stand in the way of her playing Lois Lane for another three or four years, should the series maintain its current level of popularity, would be her stamina. "It's incredibly demanding to be one of the leads in an hour-long show. It's hard to have a family that way. At some point, I would like to have children, but it's hard enough to have much of a life outside of the show right now," she says. "I'm at an age where that part of my life is becoming increasingly important to me. I'm waiting to see how it might be possible to combine everything if the show continues. I'm just taking it a day at a time. I'm not worried at all about the show itself, though, because I think there are many places to go with Lois and Clark's relationship and I think there's always room in the audience's lives for a little bit of fantasy."

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Sailor

(continued from page 33)

ments to *Sailor Moon*, and I have no idea how DIC is going to market them to the American public."

DIC's Tashjian says, "When we adapt a particular property, we need to be aware of the buying habits of Americans while preserving as much as possible of the integrity of the original product. Some aspects of *Sailor Moon* and the basic storyline will not change. However, while there are some characters and topics that are workable in the Japanese culture, they cannot be done in the U.S."

Patten points to an episode that depicts students visiting "the friendly neighborhood fortune teller" to find out how they'll score on their upcoming exams. "The implication I got was, instead of studying for tests, kids go to the fortune teller to find out if they're going to get good grades or bad. If they're going to get good grades, then they don't have to waste time studying. If it's bad grades, then why waste time studying?

"I asked somebody from Japan, is this some weird kind of humor? Or is this representative of the average Japanese school? He said, 'Oh yes, this is very, very realistic. This is how the Japanese high school kids operate.' So, I don't know how American audiences are going relate to kids going to fortune tellers instead of spending their time studying."

Other changes include a new opening with new theme music, which, Tashjian promises, "will be much more upbeat and faster."

The English adaptation is being written and dubbed in Canada, following the guidelines of supervising producer Fred Ladd, the man who adapted the American versions of *Astro Boy*, *Gigantor* and *Kimba the White Lion*.

According to Ladd, the fortune teller angle will be pretty much intact, though the "over-the-top brutality and violence" will be cut. Instead of the heroes dying in episode #46, they'll "go to the Negaverse, a kind of limbo from which they escape and come back to our universe." The Sailor team then destroys the bad guys and the Negaverse, thanks to some judicious editing and rearrangement of the animation.

At presstime, Ladd had yet to adapt episode #65, but he hopes to find a way to resolve the story arc. Ratings will determine whether the rest of *Sailor Moon* series gets adapted into English. There are presently no plans to adapt the *Sailor Moon* movies. In the meantime, American fans can now enjoy some female superhero action—in the stories of *Sailor Moon*.

Shi

(continued from page 48)

the wall between alternative comics and mainstream books."

Looking to the future, Tucci hopes to fulfill his original dream and bring *Shi* to the big screen. So far, there has been a lot of interest from Hollywood, but Tucci is biding his time. "My main interest is in not jeopardizing the integrity of the character or the storyline, and that's why I have to come along with a film. I'll be a producer on it, maybe even the assistant director. I'll do the script and the storyboards, and the thing is that they feel the same way. It has to be my vision that drives the film if it's made. I would rather it wasn't made at all than for it to be a junk movie and go straight to video. That would break my heart. I appreciate the people who buy *Shi* for its collectibility, but it also frustrates me that I work for 18 hours a day and then they just buy the book and stick it in mylar without even opening it up."

Because of *Shi's* continuing success, Tucci has kicked a great deal of money back into the title, trying to make each issue better than the previous one. "If I wanted to, I could put my books out every month on cheaper paper and make a lot more money, but I want to be in this for the long run. I want to be here 10 years from now and establish an icon character, and I think the only way I'm going to be able to do that is by establishing a level of quality for the story, the art and production values.

"I'm into entertainment, not ripping people off, and I've never been into making collectible comics. I got into it because I had a story to tell and I thought it was a good story, and so far, it's doing very well."

Despite the current spate of "bad girl" books, William Tucci hopes people will give *Shi* a try. In return, he promises a multi-layered storyline, a carefully researched historical backdrop and yes, plenty of fast-paced action scenes as well. "The book really focuses on one character, Ana Ishikawa, and I like to look at it as her journey. I try to give her as much humanity as possible, so that she's not just a killing machine. There's also a lot of action, mystery and intrigue. I try to put everything into this book that I, as a person who doesn't read comic books, *want* to read.

"It's like making a movie and having the chance to make any movie you want, so you're going to put everything you like into it. *Shi* is done by a group of people who are really dedicated to its creation, and it's really a part of us. It's also an extension of myself, and is me sharing my love of art and storytelling with others."

THE X FILES

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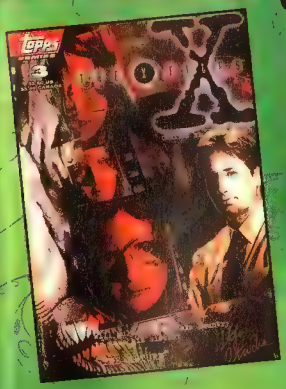

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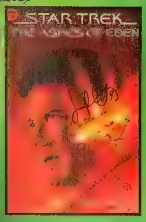

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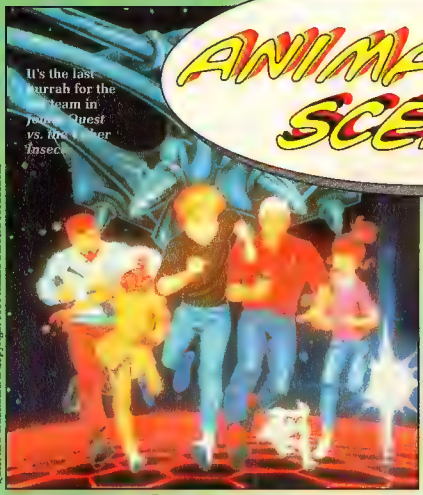


Quest Art: Trademark & Copyright 1994 Hanna-Barbera Productions

Quests Galore

Jonny's Final Quest: Prepare to say farewell to Jonny Quest as you know him. That's because Turner Entertainment and Hanna-Barbera Cartoons are launching a revised version next year with new designs, new music and yes, new voices.

But first, TNT will air a two-hour TV movie of Jonny in his "last" appearance as an 11-year-old. It's a sequel to *Jonny's Golden Quest*, the 90-minute TV movie that premiered in April 1993. Originally *Jonny's Global Questions*, the title changed to *Jonny's Global Impact*, and now it's *Jonny Quest vs. the Cyber Insects*. It was actually made more than a year ago and scheduled to air last fall to precede the new *Quest* series—but production problems delayed the new *Quest* until 1996. Thus, the TV movie's broadcast was delayed as well.

In *Cyber Insects*, Jonny (Kevin Michaels) goes to outer space for the first time as arch-fiend Dr. Zin (Jeffrey Tambor) threatens humanity with weather-altering satellites and killer insects. Reprising their roles are Don Messick as Dr. Benton Quest and Bandit, Sonny Granville Van Dusen as bodyguard Roger "Race" Bannon, Rob Paulsen as Hadji (will he pronounce "Sim sim, salla bim" correctly this time?), and Anndi McAfee as Race's daughter Jessie. A surprise guest star is Tim Matheson, the original Jonny Quest, as the computer, 4-DAC.

Other voices include Teresa Saldana as Belage, Olivia White as Scientist 426, Victor Love as World Leader, Hector Elizondo as Atacama and Robert Ito as Scientist 427.

The film was written by David Bennett Carren and J. Larry Carroll, based on a story by producer/director Mario Piluso.

TNT will premiere *Jonny Quest vs. the Cyber Insects* at 7 p.m. EST on Sunday, November 19, followed by encores at 9 and 11 p.m. Repeats will be broadcast November 23, 24, 25, 26 and December 1.

Jonny Gets Virtual: Coming your way next fall is *The Real Adventures of Jonny Quest*, which will air *21 times a week* on three Turner networks: TNT, TBS and the Cartoon Network. Hanna-Barbera is currently producing 65 episodes using studios in three continents. In the States, H-B handles the writing, storyboarding and designs. In Japan, Pacific Animation Corporation utilizes computer technology to enhance lighting, mood, special FX and camera movement. In France, Toon's Factory adds FX and digitally colors the episodes.

Real Quest Art: Copyright 1995 Hanna-Barbera Productions

***The Real Adventures of Jonny Quest* begin in fall 1996. As this preliminary concept illustration shows, there's an all-new look.**

The new series has Jonny and his Indian pal Hadji as teens, with Race Bannon's daughter Jessie adding female companionship. Stories will focus more on these characters and less on Dr. Quest and Race, but all will continue facing danger around the world in what's described as "an evocative mystery-adventure." The Quest team will take on supernatural occurrences both in the real world and in the virtual reality domain of "Questworld." In the VR environment, the team uses superpowers to combat various "supernatural" evil-doers. An ad states, "Questworld may be virtual, but the danger is definitely real!"

The redesigned main characters have also been recast. J.D. Roth is now Jonny, veteran actor George Segal replaces Messick as Dr. Quest, Robert (*Terminator 2*) Patrick is Race Bannon, Michael Benyaer is Hadji, Jessie Douglas is Jessie Bannon and Frank Welker now articulates the bulldog, Bandit. (In the original series, Bandit had real dog barks, with Messick providing whimpers and whines.)

Peter Lawrence and Takashi Masunaga, who worked together on *Peter Pan and the Pirates*, share producer-director credit. Story editor is Mike Ryan, who has a couple of What a Cartoon! shorts in the works: "Hillbilly Blue" and "Gramps." Writers include Art Bramblett, Glenn Leopold (*SWAT Kats*), Michael Maurer (*Gummi Bears*), Michael Rann, Ben Schwartz and Peter Lawrence.

Expect to see a major blitz in promotion, merchandising, home video, publishing, interactive and video games.

For those who want to see the "real" Jonny Quest, Hanna-Barbera authority Earl Kress is preparing a laserdisc set compiling all 26 episodes of *The Adventures of Jonny Quest* from 1964-1965, with a special box cover by Steve Rude.

Where There's a Quest, There's Danger: *Quest* fans got a pleasant surprise when, on September 16, *Freakazoid!* aired an irreverent homage, "Toby Danger." Written by *The Sylvester and Tweety Mysteries* story editor Tom Minton, it featured Don Messick (the original Dr. Quest) supplying the voice of Dr. Vernon Danger, Scott Menville (the 1987 Jonny Quest) voicing Danger's son Toby and Sonny Granville Van Dusen (the 1987 Race Bannon) as bodyguard Dash O'Pepper. Adding to the parody: similar music, identical sound effects and villains screaming "Aieeeee!"

"Dr. Danger is sort of an overly-funded fool, and he comes off like Hugh Beaumont spouting misguided homilies about science. He's hopelessly out of control," Minton says. "He always means well, but he has adopted a daughter because he melted her home town by accident. Sandra [Mary Scheer] is the glue that holds everything together when Dr. Danger's science fails.

"Dash O'Pepper is the enforcer. He's not by any means the brains. And Toby is very, very impressionable. Whatever Dash does, he'll gladly emulate."

Frank Welker voices Fred the Guard, and Jim Cummings is the robot Semiconductor. "We parody every bad 1980s action/adventure cartoon in which all situations were resolved by the throwing of crates or barrels." So, Dash tosses a barrel saying, "Heads up, you heathen monkeys!" This echoes a line from the original *Quest*, in which Race Bannon challenges a tribe of South American Indians in "Pursuit of the Po-hos": "All right, you ignorant savages. Get a good look at Akizeo, you heathen monkeys!"

After Warner Bros. finished the first 65 half-hours of *Animaniacs*, the studio developed numerous pilot shorts for potential series. Among them was "Toby Danger."

Minton recalls, "Several months went by after the presentation. It didn't really fit into *Animaniacs*. At one point, there was some thought at having Wakko sitting down in front of the TV and saying, 'And now, here's my favorite show.' We went back and forth on it. It was finally discarded because it was too much of a departure from the world of *Animaniacs*.

"We really didn't have any place to put it," Minton says, "until *Freakazoid!* became a comedy (back in January 1995), and came under tremendous deadline pressures, and 'Toby Danger' resurfaced as an eight-minute short in that series.

"When it was boarded, it had a longer title sequence than the one they used. It timed out to about 12 minutes, but we had only eight. It also had an epilogue that was cut, that began with Dash and Toby doing hot dog moves skiing with the island in its hydrofoil mode. The sequence escalated into ever more bizarre visuals involving an exodus of airborne mutant marine life from Lake Mead. Originally, as Toby and Dash climbed aboard the island, Dash asked Dr. Danger, 'Where to next, Doctor?' And Dr. Danger, ignoring an obvious sign pointing the way to Los Angeles, answers, 'If quantum physics is an indication, I'd say Hollywood,' and the island rises into the sky and follows the mutant marine exodus into the Hoover Dam sunset.

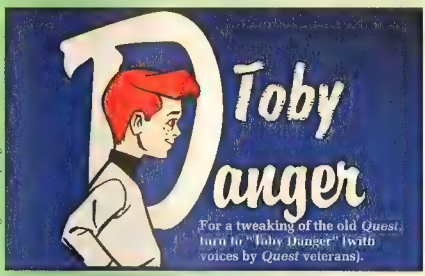
"We did 'Toby' as close to [*Quest* creator Doug] Wildey's style as we could," Minton says. "Butch Lukic and Brian Chin did a *fine* job on the boards. Brian and I had been at Ruby-Spears when Doug was there, had been exposed to him a lot and understood his sensibility.

"Eric Radomski directed it, and Eric is very good at making sure things get followed, making sure [overseas animation subcontractor] Akom followed everything as close as possible to the original Doug Wildey style. It came back pretty much as it is. We had one round of retakes. But there wasn't time for any more. We had a very short production season, the shortest we ever had. Luckily, it came out well."

Hoyt Curtain's title theme and underscore was used as a point of musical departure by *Freakazoid!* composer Richard Stone.

"We showed him the original *Jonny Quest*, and he knew exactly what we meant," Minton says. "The closest thing to that music is the Maynard Ferguson jazz band. Richard had this great 30-piece orchestra and we recorded it at the same studio Carl Stalling used."

According to Tom Minton, "The reaction so far



"Toby Danger" Art Copyright 1995 Warner Bros. Inc.

Once known as *Snowballs*, *Balto* comes to the animated rescue this holiday season.

Balto Art: Copyright 1995 Universal City Studios & Amblin

Balto For the Holidays: Just in time for Christmas—December 22, to be exact—comes *Balto*, the latest, and last, animated feature from Steven Spielberg's Amblimation unit. It's based on a true story about a heroic half-husky, half-wolf (Balto, voiced by Kevin Bacon), an outcast in his own town, who risks his life to bring life-saving medicine to the inhabitants of Nome, Alaska in the early 1900s.

The voice cast includes Bob Hoskins as Boris the goose; Bridget Fonda as Balto's love interest, Jenna; Jim Cummings as the arch-rival, Steele; Juliette Brewer as Rosy; and Phil Colins as comic relief furries Muk and Luk.

Balto is scored by the man who has composed every Amblimation film, James Horner. The director is Simon (*Fievel Goes West*) Wells; the producer is Stephen Hickner. The story was written by Cliff Ruby & Elana Lesser (*Ewoks*, *Cats Don't Dance*) and Roger Schulman & David Cohen (*ALF*).

Originally called *Snowballs*, the film has been in production for more than two years at the Amblimation unit in London. This is their last feature; the production company recently folded into DreamWorks.

has been raves. Just amazing. I think to everyone's surprise, except for perhaps mine, Brian's and Butch's, it worked. We knew it would work because there are enough people out there who had seen *Jonny Quest*. They were all astonished that it got such a huge reaction."

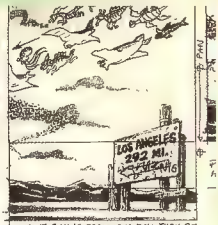
For those who missed it, "Toby Danger" will be repeating on *Freakazoid!*, which airs Saturday mornings on the WB network.

D'oh!: Last issue I said Disney was the only animation studio that offered its artists a 401k retirement plan. It's the only *union* studio that does that. Film Roman, a non-union shop, offers its employees a 401k plan.

Hanna-Barbera Raises its Shorts: This fall the Cartoon Network will air two new shorts from its What a Cartoon!/World Premiere Toons program, premiering at 7 p.m. before *Mr. Spim's Theater*.

Danger Art: Courtesy Tom Minton/Eric Radomski

Due to time constraints on *Freakazoid*, the storyboarded "Toby Danger" epilogue (complete with flying island) went unmade.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MUTANT FLYING CREATURES PULL THRU SC DISTANT 'S' CURVE AWAY, SWARM IN FLICKERING CYCLE — PAN DOWN TO GRAFITTI - COVERED SIGN.

November 5: "Mina and the Count," by Rob Renzetti, stars Mark Hamill as the Count, whose "biting schedule"—arranged by his assistant Igor (Jeff Bennett)—is hampered by an evening of tea parties and hide & seek with a charming seven-year-old named Mina (Ashley Johnson).

November 12: "Cow and Chicken" (originally "Cow and Chicken Go to Hell"), written and directed by David Feiss. Siblings Cow and Chicken are in for a devil of a time. Cow/Chicken/Devil: Charlie Adler; Mom: Candi Milo; Dad: D.B. Baker; Cerberus: Jeff Harnell.

Upcoming is "Boid 'n' Woim," created, written and directed by Miles Thompson. While driving through the desert to California, Boid (Thompson) picks up hitchhiker Woim (Tom Fahn). After a car wreck, Boid soon perceives Woim as a tasty morsel. Originally scheduled for November airing, the short will instead be shown early next year.

Currently in production: Ralph Bakshi's "Tales of the City" and "Babe, He Calls Me" are in the "tinkering" stage. Bakshi has a five-short deal with the World Premiere Toons program.

"The Worm" (a.k.a. "Tales of the Paranoid Worm"), by Eddie Fitzgerald. Paranoid Johnny Worm (Pat Pinney) seeks vengeance upon those who would step upon him. Sally: Mary Gross.

"Pizza Boy" (formerly "Pizza Jerk"), by Rob Alvarez. The Pizza Boy (Gary Imhoff) has to deliver a pizza to the Arctic Circle in five minutes. Dad: Phillip Hayes; Stewardess/Female Eskimo: Candi Milo; Male Eskimo/Guard/Gator: Brian Cummings; Bear/Dog/ Priest: Gregg Berger.

"Bloo's Gang," by Mike Milo and Harry Mclaughlin. Bloo the dog dreams up a pirate adventure for his canine chums. Simon/ Cat #1/Truck Driver: Nick Jameson; Bloo/Man/Cat #2; Berger; Stinky/Elmo/Bloo's Owner: Welker; Scully: Mike Milo.

"Johnny Bravo and the Amazon Women," by Van Partible. Hunky Johnny Bravo (Bennett) visits an island of gorgeous women. Christopher: David L. Lander; Melissa: Brenda Vaccaro; Narrator/Captain/Man #2: Maurice LeMarche; Cindy/Amazon/ Melissa singing: B.J. Ward. Layout: Partible and Butch Hartman; Animators: Partible and Alvarez; Background layout: Partible and Thompson.

Podunk Possum in "One Step Beyond," directed by Joe Orantia; written by Orantia and Elizabeth Stonecipher. Simpleton Podunk Possum (Denver Pyle) gets duped into buying a broken-down chicken coop complete with some paranoid chickens, only to find that the countryside is crawling with Feds, ghosts and aliens. Major Portions: Mays Nutter; Alien #1 and #2/Fed Agent/Cop: Berger; Winona: Kath Souci.

"Awfully Lucky," created and directed by David Doi (producer, *SWAT Kats*). Luthor (Jim Cummings), a jerk, takes possession of the "Paradox Pearl." This black-and-white pearl bestows its owner with extra good luck. Unfortunately, this is followed by extra bad luck. Chief/Explorers #1 & #2: Cummings; Old Man/ Chauffeur/Cook: Jameson; Fisherman/Doctor/Husband: Adler; Nature/Sultry Woman: Nancy Linari.

"Sledgehammer O'Possum II: What's Going on Back There?" by Pat Ventura, in which the opossum is caught in a winter storm and takes shelter in a mailbox—which upsets Ethel, the mail carrier. After some controversy with the first "Sledgehammer" short, the follow-up finished production, since it was already close to completion.

Other upcoming shorts detailed in COMICS SCENE #52: "Help?" by Bruno Bozzetto; "Strange Things," by Mike Wellins; "Hillbilly Blue," by Michael Ryan and Hartman; "The Great Eggscape," by Joe Barbera; "Wind-up Wolf," by Bill Hanna; "Crime 101" by Craig McCracken; "Blammo the Clown," by Eugene Mattos.

Currently in pre-production: "Gramps," by Mike Ryan and Hartman; "The Chicken from Outer Space," by John Dilworth; "Swamp and Ted," by John Rice; "Zoonatiks," by Joey Ahlbum; "Ignoramooses," by Milo and Mclaughlin; "Godfrey and Zeke," by Z. Moncrief and J. Rote; "Snoot's New Squat," by Victor Ortado; "Kitchen Casanova," by John McIntyre; "Larry and Steve," by Seth McFarlane; "Jungle Boy," by Partible; and "Tumbleweed Tex," by Alvarez.

***Dexter's Laboratory* Explodes** into a mini-series, the first "breakout" from Hanna-Barbera's World Premiere Toons project. Next April, six half-hour episodes will air on three Turner networks: TBS, TNT and the Cartoon Network. "Dexter's" was the first short to air on the Cartoon Network, after

Cartoon Network Cops Carrot Top: *Carrot Top's A.M. Mayhem* stars the winner of the 1994 American Comedy Award for best male stand-up, the first time a real-life personality has hosted a regular show for the Cartoon Network. The show premiered in October, and airs from 7-9 a.m. EST.

Top Photo: Mark Hill/Copyright 1995 Cartoon Network

which Turner executives analyzed feedback from focus groups, 1-800 phone lines, America Online reaction and consumer promotions during the summer that included a 10-city "Dive-In Theater" tour and traveling "Cool Toons Mobile." This year, "Dexter's Laboratory" was honored with an Emmy Award nomination, only to be beaten by *The Simpsons*.

Boy genius Dexter was created by first-time director Genndy Tartakovsky, a 25-year-old graduate from CalArts who has also worked on *2 Stupid Dogs*, *The Critic*, *Tiny Toon Adventures* and *Batman: The Animated Series*. Hanna-Barbera's president, Fred Seibert, is promoting Tartakovsky as the studio's new star talent, unlike rival studios who smother their artists in corporate anonymity.

Hanna-Barbera is so delighted with Tartakovsky they're allowing him a spin-off series that *won't* be tested as a solo short: *Dial "M" for "Monkey,"* sandwiched in between two seven-minute *Dexter* cartoons. Monkey is the star chimp (voiced by—who else—Frank Welker), equipped with superpowers to save the world from such villains as Macho Man (wrestler Randy Savage). *Monkey* was created by Tartakovsky, Craig McCracken (*Powerpuff Girls*) and Paul Rudish (*Super Secret Secret Squirrel*).

If it's popular enough, *Dexter's Laboratory* may expand to a weekday strip for 1997.

Now in Bookstores: In October, Hyperion released *The Illusion of Life*, a reprint of the 1981 edition written by two of Walt Disney's legendary supervising animators, Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston. It has been out of print for more than five years, and those fortunate to find a copy have had to pay up to $500 for it. Why? It's considered to be a key resource for students of animation and Disney fans. The 576-page hardback is loaded with hundreds of black-and-white and color illustrations and photos, with text describing practically every facet of producing an animated feature at Disney, including development of character, story, music, special FX and the camera department. This classic book can be yours for $60.

Toy Story, the innovative computer-animation collaboration between Disney and Pixar, is now in theaters.

Toy Story Art: Copyright 1995 The Walt Disney Company

Disney's Toys for Christmas: What do toys do when kids aren't around to play with them? They come to life—at least, they do in Disney's *Toy Story*, a comedy-adventure created and directed by John Lasseter. The studio calls this the first full-length feature created with computer-generated animation. It's also the first of a three-picture deal between Walt Disney Feature Animation and Northern California-based Pixar. They previously collaborated in developing CAPS (Computer Assisted Paint System), for which they won a special technical Academy Award in 1992.

Every toy fears that they'll be replaced by newer toys. Such is the case when a pull-string cowboy named Woody (voiced by Tom Hanks) is threatened by his owner's latest acquisition, action figure Buzz Lightyear (Tim Allen). To Woody's chagrin, six-year-old Andy (John Morris) gives Buzz more attention, and Buzz is liked by their fellow toymates: Slinky Dog (Jim Varney), hot-tempered Mr. Potato Head (Don Rickles), insecure dinosaur Rex (Wallace Shawn), stubborn piggy bank Hamm (John Ratzenberger) and figurine lamp Bo Peep (Annie Potts), who happens to light up Woody's life. Meanwhile, Buzz insists he's not a toy but a space ranger just landed on an alien planet.

Woody tries to dispose of Buzz, but his plans backfire and they find themselves lost in the outside world. They're forced to overlook their differences as they try to return to the safety of Andy's bedroom.

Director Lasseter won an Oscar in 1988 for "Tin Toy," and was nominated for another in 1986 for "Luxo, Jr." *Toy Story*'s producers are Ralph J. Guggenheim and Bonnie Arnold. Randy Newman wrote and performed the film's score and three songs. Based on an original story by Lasseter, Pete Docter, Andrew Stanton and Joe Ranftt, the screenplay was written by Joss Whedon, Stanton, Joel Cohen and Alex Sokolow. Look for a detailed article on *Toy Story* in STARLOG #221 and the movie in theaters this month.

—Bob Miller

Perennial Pictures: While dozens of holiday specials are already flooding the airwaves and video stores this year, preparations for *next year's* specials have already begun. Perennial Pictures Film Corporation of Indianapolis is busy producing *The Ugly Duckling's Christmas Wish*, their first direct-to-video feature. It's an update of the classic fairy tale, as Omar the Ugly Duckling seeks a home in the big city, meets a runaway girl named Ruby, and with the help of a friendly mouse, they make a special Christmas for themselves. To be released by Anchor Bay Entertainment, the 70-minute OVA is produced, written and directed by studio founders Jerry Reynolds and Russ Harris. Unlike West Coast studios, Perennial employs all American talent. The studio has produced 14 half-hour specials, as well as the recent "O. Ratz" short that premiered July 2 on the Cartoon Network.

Danger Storyboard Art: Butch Lukic

The "Danger" storyboards by Butch Lukic and Brian Chin helped captured the feel of the late Doug Wildey's original *Quests*.

COMICS screen

All of these projects are live-action unless specified. Those boxed are new or updated since last listing. **Not everything listed will ultimately ever be made.** S: script; D: director; P: producer; EP: executive producer; C: creator; AN: animated; LA: live-action; Syn: syndicated; HB: Hanna-Barbera; Nel: Nelvana; WD: Disney; WB: Warner Bros.; PP: Paramount; U: Universal; Col: Columbia; Am: Amblin; DH: Dark Horse; FR: Film Roman; QDE: Quincy Davis Entertainment; M: Miramax. **Attn. all pros:** Info to be added to this list is cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016. (Info as of 10/25/95)

Accident Man. Film. S: Pat Mills, Tony Skinner.

Adventure Man. AN. WB. WB Net.

The Airtight Garage. AN. EP: Kurosawa Ent. P: Philippe Rivier. D: Moebius, Katsuhiro Otomo. S: Randy Lofficier.

Annie & the Tomorrow Team. AN. TV project. Fremantle. To debut fall '96. Also **Annie II.** TV Movie. S: Trish Soodik. D: Ian Toynton. W/George Hearn, Joan Collins. ABC. Airs November.

Archie. Film. S: Keith Giglio, Juliet Aires. P: Ben Myron. U.

The Badger. Film/TV. PP.

Barbarella. Film. Nel.

❑ **Barb Wire.** Film. V/DH. W/Pamela Lee. D: David Hogan. P: Mike Richardson, Todd Moyer, Brad Wyman. April release.

Beavis and Butt-head. AN film. S: Mike Judge.

Betty Boop. AN film. S: Jerry Rees. EP: R. Fleischer, R. Zanuck.

Biker Mice from Mars. Film. P: Al Ruddy, Andre Morgan, David Chan. S: Greg Johnson.

❑ **Black Widow.** TV movie. Fox. S: Mel Friedman, Christopher Cosby.

Blade. S: David S. Goyer.

Broom Hilda. Film. Fox.

Captain Thunder & Blue Bolt. Film. PP. P: Joe Wizan. Consultants: Roy & Dann Thomas.

Casper. AN series. U/Harvey An. Feb. '96. Fox.

Catwoman. Film. WB. S: Dan Waters.

Cisco Kid. TV movie sequel. W/Jimmy Smits, Cheech Marin. D: Luis Valdez. S: David Taylor. TNT.

The Crow: City of Angels. Film sequel. D: Tim Pope. S: David Goyer. W/Vincent Perez.

Crying Freeman. Film. D: C. Gans. Shot.

Cyberforce. AN. Pilot. Fox. Graz Ent. Top Cow.

Daredevil. Film. Fox. D: Carlo Carlei. S: Carlei, Chris Columbus. P: Ben Myron, Tony Ludwig, Alan Riche.

Dennis the Menace. Sequel. S: Tim McCanlies.

Dr. Strange. Film. S: David S. Goyer. Col.

Donkey Kong Country. AN series. Nel.

Doom's IV. Film. P/S: Rob Liefeld. Am.

❑ **Dudley Do-Right.** Film. P: Joe Singer, John Davis. S: Peter Seaman & Jeff Price.

Dungeons & Dragons. Film. Sweetpea Ent. S: Topper Lilien & Carroll Cartwright.

Elfquest. AN film. P: Ed Pressman, Jeremy Chechik.

Fantastic Four. Film. D: Chris Columbus.

Faust. Film. D: Stuart Gordon. S: David Quinn.

Fist of the North Star. Film. D: Tony Randel. Shot.

Flash Gordon. Film. S: Steven de Souza. P: Ben Myron, Rick Karo, David Helpern. Madalay-Sony.

From Hell. Film.

Gen 13. AN film. D: Kevin Altieri. Wildstorm Prods.

❑ **Generation X.** TV movie. Fox. S: Eric Blakeney. W/Matt Frewer. Airs January.

Ghost Rider. Film. S: David S. Goyer. Savoy.

Gothik. Film. P: Jeff Most.

Green Hornet. Film. U.

Grimjack. Film.

Hate. AN Film. S: Peter Bagge. Colossal Pictures.

Incredible Hulk. Film. U. P: Gale Anne Hurd.

Inspector Gadget. Film. S: J. Loeb III, M. Weisman. U.

Iron Man. Film. S: Andrew Chapman. P: John Langley, Elie Cohn, Stephen Chao. EP: Avi Arad, Stan Lee. Fox.

❑ **The Jetsons.** Film. Turner. D: Chuck Russell. S: Scott Alexander, Larry Karaszewski.

❑ **Jonny Quest.** AN & LA films. New AN series. Due out fall '96. (see Animation Scene)

Kull. Film. U. S: C. Pogue.

Lt. Blueberry. Film.

Little Lulu. AN. Lulu: Tracey Ullman.

Lost Universe. Film. M.

Luke Cage. Film. D (& P): John Singleton. S: John Doughrity. P: Ed Pressman.

Machine. Film. P: Larry Gordon. DH. U.

Mad. TV series. Fox.

❑ **Madman.** Film. P: Ben Myron, David Helpern. EP: Mike Allred, Robert Stein. S: Allred. U.

Mark 5. Film. S: William Wisher, Nick Sagan.

The Mask. Film sequel w/Jim Carrey & Cameron Diaz. D: Chuck Russell.

Prime is headed towards the movie screen while Spider-Man copes with legal entanglements.

❑ **The Men in Black.** Film. Col/Am. W/Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith & Vincent D'Onofrio. S: Ed Solomon. D: Barry Sonnenfeld. Makeup FX: Rick Baker.

Mike Danger. Film. M.

Mr. Hero. Film. M.

❑ **Mr. Magoo.** Film. LA film. WD. S: Pat Proft. P: Ben Myron. EP: Hank Saperstein.

Modesty Blaise. Film. M. P: Marcelo Anciano, Michael Berrow.

Momma. AN project. Colossal Pictures.

Mutant Chronicles. Film. P: Ed Pressman. S: Philip Eisner.

NeverEnding Story. AN. Nel.

Nexus. AN film. HB.

❑ **Nick Fury.** TV movie. Fox. S: David Goyer.

Peanuts. Film. WB.

❑ **The Phantom.** Film. PP. W/Billy Zane, Patrick McGoohan. D: Simon Wincer. Shooting.

Pit Bulls. Film. P: Larry Gordon. DH. U.

Plastic Man. Film. WB/Am.

Prince Valiant. Film. S: M. Beckner, Roger Kumble, Marlene King. Neue Constantin.

❑ **Prime.** Film. U. S: John Turman.

Prophet. Film. Tristar. P: Rob Liefeld.

The Punisher. NBC TV movie.

Richie Rich. AN series. Fall '96. U/Harvey.

Rock City. Film. Blue Turtle.

The Rocky Horror Show. AN series. Nel.

❑ **The Saint.** Film. PP. D: Philip Noyce. Delayed again.

Sandman. Film. S: Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio. P: Oren Koules, Alan Riche.

Sand Sharks. AN. DIC.

❑ **Savage Dragon.** AN series. U/Lacewood. Airing on USA Network.

Sgt. Rock. Film. P: Joel Silver. S/D: John Milius. WB.

Scooby Doo. Film. S: Craig Titley. Turner.

Silver Surfer. Film. S: John Turman. Neue Constantin.

She-Hulk. CBS.

Spawn. Film. S: Alan McElroy. New Line. AN series. HBO.

Speed Racer. Film. S: J.J. Abrams. WB. Summer 1996.

Spider-Man. Film.

The Spirit. LA & AN projects. P: M. Uslan, B. Melniker.

Street Fighter. AN. Graz & Capcom USA.

Stretch Armstrong. Film. D: William Dear. S: Mike Werb, Michael Colleary.

❑ **Superman.** Film. S: Jonathan Lemkin. AN series. WB. (see article)

❑ **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles IV.** Film. S: Christian Ford, Roger Soffer. D: Eric Allard. MPCA.

Terry & the Pirates. TV.

❑ **UltraForce.** AN series. Bohbot. Story editors: Marty Isenberg, Bob Skir. Now airing.

Vampirella. Film.

V for Vendetta. Film. S: Hilary Henkin. P: Joel Silver. WB.

Venom. Film.

Virus. Film. DH. S: Chuck Pfarrer. P: G. A. Hurd. U.

❑ **X.** Film. DH. U. S: Steven Grant

X-Men. Film. Fox. P: Lauren Shuler-Donner. S: Andrew Kevin Walker.

Yummy Fur. Film. D: Bruce McDonald. Yorktown Prods.

Zen Intergalactic Ninja. Film. D: Brian Yuzna.

❑ **Zorro.** Film. D: Robert Rodriguez. W/Antonio Banderas. Amblin/DreamWorks. S: Terry Rossio, Ted Elliott.

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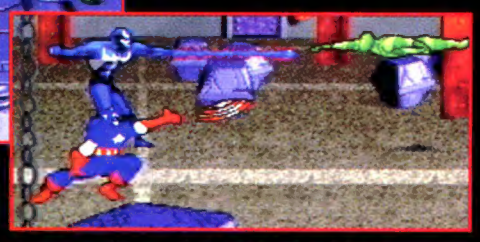

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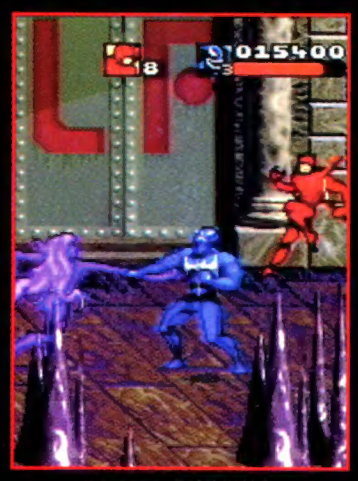

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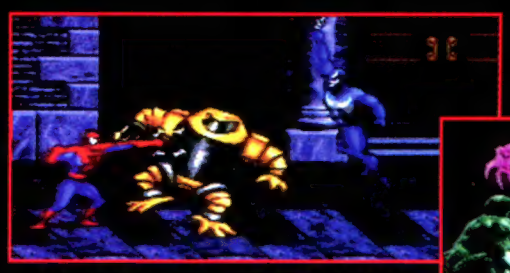

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